GCSE
GEOGRAPHY

8035/1 Living with the physical environment
Report on the Examination

8035/1
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General Comments

The examination appeared to be appropriate for the age and ability range of students and it achieved widespread differentiation. Examiners felt that students were well prepared and there was a strong sense that both teachers and students were confident with the demands of the paper and assessment objectives, despite all the challenges faced by schools over the past two years. For a large proportion of students, the level of language employed in the question paper appeared to present no obvious barriers to comprehension. Time management didn't appear to be an issue for students this year, with the vast majority finishing the paper in the time allowed. The rubric regarding question choice was almost universally followed. However, handwriting was reported by many examiners to be a concern and while students are under time pressure there are occasions where this becomes illegible and there is a risk that work may not be fully credited due to this.

It was pleasing to see that centres and students had used some of the feedback from the last series in order to develop their examination skill in readiness for this year. There was evidence of greater precision and perception when using information from photographs. More students introduced pertinent case study material in support of answers even where this was not an explicit requirement. There was better understanding of geographical vocabulary and improved ability to develop and extend ideas when answering 2 and 4-mark questions. It is pleasing to see that a large number of students are being well prepared by their centres to deconstruct 6 and 9 mark questions with the majority attempting to address all the requirements of the questions (including evaluative comment) but with varying degrees of success.

As expected, the most perceptive and well-prepared students performed very well across the paper and some excellent geography was seen. They were familiar with, and able to cope with, handling the wide variety of ways in which geographical data was presented to them. They displayed ability to cope with the skills involved and showed a mature and sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the topics examined. Understanding core principles of geography, selectively exemplified through case studies or exemplar support is intrinsic in the success of students on this paper. Those who could write effectively about specific places, schemes and strategies, and showed understanding of physical processes scored highly.

Most students were able to make a genuine attempt at their chosen questions, although some found it difficult to interpret tasks and write effective responses to some or all questions. Many students still confuse key command words such as explain, compare, suggest and discuss, and a minority misunderstood terms such as economic/environmental and physical (as opposed to human) factors.

As ever, the crucial aspect for success in the longer answers is to keep a sharp eye on the actual question set and not to become carried away in reproducing pre-learned material. Scripts which achieved marks in the middle mark ranges could have been improved with the understanding that the extended writing questions have an evaluative requirement, not just the need for knowledge and understanding of the topic. In addition, these evaluative comments should be substantiated.
For less able students, the questions enabled some engagement, with secure knowledge of geographical content and application of understanding to sources gaining respectable marks. They attempted more questions and there were fewer empty spaces compared with previous series. Most were confident in addressing shorter responses but frequently their extended writing was limited. They generally found the numeracy skills-related questions straightforward, although a significant number found the map and photograph questions challenging. Some lower achieving students tended to ignore the resources provided or failed to include exemplar support where it was a pre-requisite of the question. A minority of students produced superficial answers showing only a sketchy understanding of the subject matter.

Responses across the paper were not entirely consistent, and some questions caused more issues or difficulty for students. Outcomes were similar for Sections A and B, but Section C, landscapes in the UK, achieved lower average marks than expected. 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.

Advice to students

- Read the question carefully – it is important to spend time doing this, especially the 6 and 9 mark extended writing questions. If it helps, underline command words and words which indicate the context of the question.
- Know the meaning of and respond correctly to command words, eg know the difference between describe and explain, be able to compare, know how to discuss, evaluate and make judgements
- Write as clearly and precisely as possible, avoiding vague, general statements
- Be accurate and precise when using information from maps, graphs and diagrams.
- Know how to work out measures of central tendency, percentages and other mathematical calculations
- Learn the details of case studies to give them authenticity. Avoid writing generic answers to question that require exemplar support.
- Use the number of marks available for a section as a guide to the time spent on each question and the degree to which the answers should be developed
- Develop ideas using linked points, and extend answers in order to increase the marks which can be awarded. Using links, such as 'this means that' or 'as a result of this', help to connect the development to the reason.
- Identify the correct focus specified in the question stem, eg causes or effects/impacts, environmental or economic, physical or human.
- When answering the extended-writing, 9-mark questions, be aware of what is required to access Level 3. Try to include specific locational knowledge and understanding applied to the question (AO1/AO2). An often-overlooked area is the need to try to make on-going discussion or assessment supported with evidence (AO3)
- Learn the meanings of key words in order to be able to define and accurately use geographical terminology.
- Know the names of continents and oceans, as well as key lines of latitude and be able to recognise these on a world map.
- Improve understanding of processes, especially in the context of physical landscapes and tectonic plate margins.
- Approach questions which ask for comparison by writing comparative statements.
- Avoid direct lifts from diagrams, maps and text when a question asks for interpretation of ideas and requires the student’s own understanding. Aim to comment and develop points fully rather than copying the material word for word.
- If sketches are used to illustrate features, it is essential to add labelling or annotation to enhance the written explanation.
- Include evidence or data from a source if a question asks for it. However, data needs to be used to support statements being made rather than just being lifted and presented in isolation.
- Make it clear, when using the extra space at the back of the question and answer booklet, that the answer is continued and indicate the number of the question accurately.

- Ensure that the examination rubric is followed correctly, answering only two of the three questions in Section C.

Section A: The challenge of Natural Hazards

Many parts of this question were successfully answered. The multiple choice and cloze-type questions were generally accessible and several of the low tariff questions produced favourable outcomes. Analysis of graphical material was encouraging (Figure 1) as was interpretation of maps and diagrams, especially Figures 3 and 4. In questions 1.4 and 1.10 there was often a reluctance to develop ideas beyond the source material provided. The understanding of physical processes was variable, especially in question 1.11, and the average marks for the higher tariff questions was lower than in 2022

1.1 Most answers to this straightforward multiple-choice question were correct. Students understood the distinction between natural as opposed to human factors affecting climate change. A small minority thought that deforestation was a human factor.

1.2 The vast majority recognised that B was the correct answer. A small minority circled more than one answer, so couldn't be awarded a mark.

1.3 This skills-based question requiring accurate interpretation of the data shown on the graph was answered accurately by the majority of students, but almost 20% missed the question either because it was too difficult or because they didn't see it at the bottom of the page.

1.4 Some struggled to go beyond the resource. They listed the effects as shown in the key and linked these to the location, but such lifting was not creditworthy. Some students provided answers discussing the impacts on wildlife without focusing on the effects on people. A few drifted into causes of climate change. Others did make links between the different effects in the key, realising that flood damage may cause food shortages for example. The most effective answers took the clues from the effects given and developed ideas fully, based on their own understanding. For example, they suggested that floods would leave people potentially susceptible to malnutrition, starvation or homelessness and subsequently become displaced. Others focused on the impacts of lower crop yields, which might lead to reduced food supplies, increased food insecurity and greater risk of hunger. In this type of question, it is important to apply understanding to the source and to develop ideas fully, rather than simply stating what can be seen on the map.

1.5 This cloze question was generally well answered, although a significant proportion thought that sinking air causes low pressure, despite the evidence provided in the resource. A less common error was to write 'prevailing winds' or 'polar winds' instead of 'trade winds'.

1.6 Most students were able to analyse the map and give the correct answer.

1.7 A significant proportion identified the wrong storm (often 'Great Bola' as they had not taken the year into account) or wrote the name of the area affected as they hadn't realised they needed to use the information in the third column rather than that in the second column.
1.8 The fact that the median was between two storms posed a problem for a small proportion of students. Many of those giving correct answers included a calculation. Most that answered incorrectly gave the figures for either Mitch or Haiyan.

1.9 This was successfully answered. A wide variety of valid reasons were given. The critical aspect was identifying a reason and then linking this to the variation in the number of deaths, and addressing why these would be higher in some areas than others. Answers generally referred to wealth or

development levels, the strength of the tropical storm, the preparedness of areas and the population density. Some students mentioned 2 separate points but with no development so could only achieve 1 mark.

1.10 Most students were able to engage well with the question although evaluation of the extent (AO3) was limited in many answers. Protection was understood by nearly all, although many students assumed the cyclone shelter was a house. A significant proportion identified features of the shelter and how they protect the population. Prediction was also generally well-understood and was linked to evacuation. Few students included their own case study knowledge but, where they did, Haiyan was the most common example. Some extended their answers to include other forms of protection and preparation including the use of evacuation and storm drills. A significant proportion effectively evaluated the problems with using prediction where the tropical cyclone can change course. The best answers had an evaluative context throughout showing a clear awareness of the effectiveness of the strategies and, at times, referred to differences between HICs and LICS, the role of education and perception in the level of success achieved.

1.11 As would be expected, answers to this question varied widely and discriminated effectively as a result. Some lower achieving students did not attempt this final question in Section A, despite the stimulus material provided. The average mark for the question was low Level 2.

Some students described what they could observe the diagrams in a literal sense and did not have the knowledge and understanding to go beyond the information provided. Others just established where volcanoes and/or earthquakes occurred at different plate margins. There were many technically simplistic answers and misunderstandings about the processes involved. Many saw earthquakes simply as the result of plates colliding and volcanoes were thought to occur as a result of large gaps appearing between plate margins. A minority of students included misconceptions about the processes involved. These included the ideas that volcanoes occur at conservative plate boundaries, or that continental plates are subducted at destructive plate boundaries and that earthquakes don't occur at constructive margins.

However, most knew the characteristics of the three different margins and could develop from the diagrams the processes responsible for volcanoes and earthquakes. This was usually linked to the direction of shift, the impact on magma and friction or tension, which were often used interchangeably. Some answers confused the plate which subducted at destructive margins or were partial in explaining the plate movement and the resulting earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. A large proportion understood the plates were moving together but not all were able to use the term subduction, instead plates collided, crashed or banged into each other or simply met. How magma reaches the surface was poorly described with the term gaps used frequently. A few drifted into consideration of impacts or responses to tectonic hazards, including detailed accounts of specific examples, for which there was no credit. Relatively few indicated that it is the release of pressure that caused the earthquake to occur.

The best responses addressed the underlying cause of plate movement which is a critical part of the process, and there were a number of accomplished answers that showed detailed understanding of ridge push/slab pull and gravitational sliding movements as the underlying mechanisms. The majority of students who explained plate movements still referred to convection currents in the mantle as being the underlying cause. Some gave a clear explanation of the nature of vulcanicity or seismicity at the different margins, referring to shield and composite volcanoes and shallow and deep focus earthquakes.

In this type of question, it is vital to have a secure understanding of plate tectonic theory, ideally updated, and be able to link this with the occurrence of seismic activity and volcanic eruptions at different plate margins.

SPaG. The average mark for SPaG was just under 2, indicating that students generally expressed themselves clearly, using a range of suitable vocabulary in grammatically correct answers.

Section B: The Living World

This section yielded similar marks to those recorded in 2022. Many students demonstrated a thorough grasp of the relevant concepts, particularly the lower tariff items, and almost all attempted each of the sub questions. Some of the case study detail was limited in detail and accuracy, and there was some misunderstanding of key geographical terms. Graphical interpretation and use of most source material was secure, particularly Figures 7, 8 and 9. Students were able to complete mathematical tasks accurately, support their comments with data from the resources and, in the main, address the command words. However, the 6-mark question based on text stimulus was not answered as effectively as expected; development was limited and there was over dependence on the wording of the source.

2.1 This was generally answered correctly, although a sizeable minority identified the 'sun' as a producer.

2.2 The question seemed straightforward but the majority of students were unable to give a clear answer. It was important to make a comparative statement or to show knowledge of the difference between a food chain and a food web. Often, only one aspect was considered. It was sufficient to say that or that a food web consists of multiple food chains.

2.3 This question was generally answered well although some assumed humans would starve to death as they would have no food source. Some students misunderstood the arrows in the food web, believing there would be fewer crayfish as a result of the death of the trout. Some drifted into explanation and gave a reasoned account of why changes would occur but this was not a requirement of the question.

2.4 Some students failed to understand the demands of the question and offered a general comment about what producers and consumers are or how they are linked in a non-food related way. A significant minority used the context of a large-scale ecosystem and even more gave no example. The best noted what a producer is and how the consumer is reliant, with examples of species linked to the selected small-scale ecosystem. Credit was given for using relevant information from Figure 7.

2.5 This skills-based question was accessible as the vast majority understood the requirements of describing distribution. Students were awarded one mark for identifying the link with the equator and many went on to identify distribution within the tropics. Some gained a mark by listing the relevant continents. A minority went on to outline reasons for distribution which was not creditworthy.

2.6 A significant majority were able to analyse the information in Figure 9 and select the correct answer, occasionally accompanied by a mathematical calculation.

2.7 There was a mixed response to the question. Whilst a significant number of students correctly identified heavy rainfall or hot humid climate, many just selected a word from Figure 9 such as leaching or weathering.

2.8 Deforestation was by far the main response, followed by logging. A wide range of other human activities were credited. A significant number were perhaps misled by Figure 9 and identified 'litter' as a human activity interfering with the nutrient cycle. The command is "suggest" so students should apply their own understanding to the Figure. They should also be familiar with the stores and flows of the nutrient cycle.

2.9 Evaluation and judgement were clear in most responses, prompted by the simple command 'Do you agree? Explain your answer' The text stimulus in Figure 10 saw a number copy parts of this out rather than seizing on the clues within it and developing the information. However, the majority of students identified largely negative environmental impacts, positive economic impacts and were able to identify which were more important to access Level 2 or beyond.

The environmental impact was often covered more convincingly than the economic, with students emphasising loss of biodiversity and enhanced greenhouse effect, and flooding and soil erosion to a much lesser extent. The economic aspects were often linked to opportunities for international trade and the multiplier effect with pertinent information being used in support. Some excellent responses included relevant own knowledge, often related to medicines. Others used specific case study information to develop their argument.

There were some informed evaluations relating to the generally positive economic impacts in contrast to the usually negative environmental ones, often with comment integrated throughout. Lower achieving students just mentioned jobs and money.

As with question 1.4 it is essential in this type of question to use the source selectively and appropriately avoiding the temptation to make direct lifts without qualification or explanation.

2.10 There was a greater reference to hot deserts than cold environments in response to this question. Students were given a list of economic opportunities in the question stem, and for some, this was the only basis of the answer, writing generic statements about these in terms of opportunities and the money and jobs offered for each. Some indicated that it was hard to fish in hot deserts – or that there was little of this. There is a need to use the stimulus and not assume all are present in every context. Most managed to name a case study although its use varied. A significant number of students mentioned a place or region at the beginning and then gave very generic responses. Quite a few students incorrectly selected a semi desert area, usually the Sahel region, which then drifted into management strategies to prevent further desertification rather than focusing on economic opportunities.

Others clearly had the knowledge of the opportunities with specific information on the Thar Desert or the Western Desert or Svalbard or Alaska, so accessed Level 2 marks, but lacked a focus on discussion. There was evidence of good knowledge and understanding regarding opportunities linked to mining in the selected areas and the ability to trade and generate wealth leading to the development of the multiplier effect and subsequent investment. Other aspects covered in some detail with appropriate geographical support included tourism in both areas, energy in hot deserts and fishing in cold environments. In general, answers focusing on Svalbard or Alaska tended to be better answered with more specific information which was often lacking for hot deserts. The scale for the case study was sometimes too large, covering the Sahara desert for example, and suggesting the whole area was suitable for solar energy and/or tourism.

The best answers entered into discussion regarding the scale of the opportunities and the specific employment/money yielded; they considered the relative importance of the opportunities or the challenges that may have limited the opportunities being (further) developed. Successful responses were well structured, with a balance of different opportunities, and clear links to development, leading to a valid conclusion. There were some excellent answers that discussed specific environmental constraints, and the opportunities for resource exploitation. The more sophisticated answers looked at ability to overcome challenges in order for development to take place. This was determined by factors such as availability of water, physical terrain, extremes of temperature, technology, money available, access and transport, and value of resources. At the top end, there were some

comprehensive answers that integrated several economic opportunities with assessment of the constraints, within a competent, discursive mini-essay.

Section C: UK Physical Landscapes

These three optional questions yielded variable responses, especially the levels response questions worth 4 and 6 marks. Students appeared to be generally confident with the low tariff numeracy skills questions and with photograph and map interpretation tasks. Understanding of the sequence of change involved in landform development was clearly demonstrated by some, particularly in relation to coastal and glacial landforms, but the processes involved were not always clearly expressed and many answers were limited to Level 1. Knowledge of appropriate terminology was often limited, particularly the terms used in relation to physical processes of erosion, transport and weathering. The understanding of hard engineering methods was generally secure and students made good use of source material in question 3, less so in questions 4 and 5. Some weaker scripts included answers to all 3 questions, but these were a small minority.

Question 3 Coastal landscapes in the UK

3.1 Roughly half of the responses identified the correct answer. Longshore drift was a very popular incorrect response. It is important to be familiar with the terminology used in the specification.

3.2 Some left this answer blank. The most common correct answers were mechanical and chemical weathering, and freeze thaw weathering.

3.3 The majority selected the correct answer (2.25 km). This was a basic question but some students find it difficult to measure distance on OS maps, despite the presence of a scale immediately under the map.

3.4 This question was very accessible and a wide variety of erosional features could be identified from the map and/or photograph. Stumps, stacks, caves or arches were present in the majority of answers (in many, all four were present). Some made greater use of the map and photograph to describe the evidence in more detail although this was not essential to be awarded the marks.

3.5 The explanation of formation of spits and bars was variable, and at times there was confusion with other landforms, notably stacks and stumps, perhaps because of the previously used photograph showing features of erosion. Some had a clear understanding of process, but the sequence of development was at best partial, with most failing to mention the requirement for a change in direction of a coastline. Longshore drift was mentioned but not always fully understood. Some students were able to explain the formation of recurves due to secondary winds and waves and the growth of a saltmarsh.

The most convincing answers considered the process of longshore drift linked to coastline shape, the significance of wind and wave direction and the formation of both landforms indicated. Labelled diagrams were sometimes used to illustrate clear sequence and process. In questions about the formation of landforms it is important to show understanding of specific processes and integrate the explanation of process into the formation sequence using the correct terminology.

3.6 This question was generally accessible with average marks well into Level 2. Most recognised the different types of hard engineering present; some legitimately added gabions and even tetrapods as an alternative. There was some drift to soft engineering which was not relevant in this question. Some students noted features visible from the image in a basic way and confined their observations to economic costs and benefits. Other weaker answers just considered hard engineering strategies

in a general sense and failed to focus on specific strategies, despite the evidence shown in the photograph.

However, the majority did extend their answers to consider a range of advantages and disadvantages for at least two of the hard engineering strategies shown. Many used the photograph effectively to show awareness of the negative effects of groynes in a downdrift direction, picking out the idea of cliff collapse where the coast is not protected. There was also at times effective use of own knowledge regarding other strategies, with integrated evaluation.

Some students offered well-organised, named schemes; apart from Mappleton and Hornsea there were accounts of Lyme Regis, Dawlish Warren, Barton on Sea and others. More able students could fully explain how the management scheme works to protect the coastline, but in addition considered their flaws with specific reference to an example.

Question 4 River landscapes in the UK

4.1 Answers were almost equally split between abrasion and attrition, suggesting some confusion amongst students about the processes of erosion

4.2 A significant number of students either left this answer blank or stated an erosional process or even transport by boat! The majority of students identified a valid process of transportation (often saltation or suspension) and a small number gave a clear description.

4.3 This question which required the estimation of area within a grid square caused problems for some students. 0.6 sq km was a common answer, suggesting that students had not read or understood the question correctly. Some may have estimated the area of mudflats as opposed to the saltmarsh.

4.4 Many did not use the map when answering this question and either used vague terms, such as swamp, or just identified grass. It may be that estuaries are a less familiar feature to many students. The most common creditworthy answers referred to salt marsh, mudflats or the river mouth being wide. There was no credit for land features nearby, such as the flat floodplain.

4.5 The question was surprisingly poorly answered. There was frequent misunderstanding of the term ‘physical’ with students discussing physical barriers such as dams or embankments, but also other human factors such as urbanisation and deforestation. Sometimes, there was the start of a sequence, linked to features such as heavy rainfall, impermeable rock or the presence of trees which began to explain the increase or decrease in flood risk, but often there was insufficient clarity to be awarded Level 2 marks. There was often an over-focus on the morphology of the river or flat / low-lying land. Those that mentioned physical features often neglected to link overland flow to lag time or peak discharge which would have helped them access top L2 more easily.

The best responses had a clear sequence which noted such processes as interception and the role of tree roots and so the reduction of flood risk when linked to vegetation cover. Others focused on the role of relief as a factor, suggesting that steep slopes can encourage greater surface run-off, so increasing flood risk. Note that to be credited with full marks, at least two relevant factors were required.

4.6 The concept of ‘issues’ was not always understood in responses to this question. There was also some misunderstanding of the text where students often believed that the cost of the flood management scheme was £1billion rather than this equating with the cost of flooding. Other clues in Figure 16 were not always grasped or developed in the context of issues, for example, the fact that the cost of flooding may double in the next 30 years, and discussion of linked disadvantages, such

as disruption for people living in the area, potential increase in flooding in other areas as a result of the flood relief channel and disturbance to habitats. Some used just the flood relief channel idea given, which was one way of answering the question, and identified issues from this. A number of students wrote about the issues around flooding, rather than management, for which there was little or no credit.

Basic responses relied on generic points such as the overall economic costs, the length of time to build and noise during construction. Better answers went beyond these simple points to a consideration of relative costs of protection versus flood and noting the increasing severity likely in the future. The impact on the natural environment was considered and conflict between those who would benefit from protection and those who wouldn't. Some referred to other flood management schemes purposefully, both hard and soft engineering strategies, and discussed issues that were present.

In some of the most impressive answers a discursive approach was adopted, and students successfully incorporated exemplars of specific flood management schemes they had studied including the Jubilee river flood-relief channel and Quaggy river restoration. As with other questions which make use of a text stimulus it is crucial to go beyond the source and apply understanding to the material provided.

Question 5 Glacial landscapes in the UK

There were far fewer responses to this question but it performed slightly worse than other options in Section C. The figure may be stilted because a significant proportion of responses were rubric offences.

5.1 Answers were almost equally split between erratic and moraine amongst those that had studied this topic.

5.2 Bulldozing was the most common credit-worthy answer, but plucking and freeze-thaw were commonly suggested as methods of transport. Knowledge of specification terminology was limited in these first two questions.

5.3 Most students provided a correct answer, showing a good grasp of basic map skills.

5.4 This question was less successfully answered than 3.4 and 4.4. A significant proportion of students did not access the marks here. They seemingly struggling to describe the long and narrow nature of the lake, and had difficulty specifying the type or shape of valley in which the ribbon lake is found. The most common answers focused on the shape of the lake (long and narrow), with some using map evidence to work out length and width measurements. There was no credit for describing features of the surrounding landscape

5.5 Many answers to the question were quite disjointed. Some identified the processes such as abrasion, plucking and rotational slip, but did not understand the role they played in corrie formation or give a clear sequential explanation of the formation of the landform. Some had partial sequences, such as snow becoming ice and the deepening of the basin. A few tried to explain other landforms, including glacial troughs and even aretes. Others attempted to explain corrie formation without any reference at all to the involvement of snow, ice or glaciers. Surprisingly a number of students identified water erosion as being significant.

However, the better scripts included answers that explained the initial formation and the sequence of changes over time, with integrated explanation of the relevant processes. Knowledge of processes is critical in this type of question

5.6 The average mark for this question was mid-Level 2. Some students struggled to understand the concept of conflict between development and conservation. Answers were often quite vague, relying largely on the text and the picture and describing the pros and cons without specifically focussing on conflict. Responses were often generic or simply described the features of the zip wire in terms of providing an income from tourism. Where conflict was alluded to it tended to focus on generic conflicts relating to footpath erosion, pollution (type often not stated) and litter. Some answers considered delays to local traffic due to tourist congestion and the associated impacts on the environment.

However, some used case study knowledge of the Lake District to develop ideas regarding the impact on the natural scenery and the value of it causing conflict between café and hotel businesses in local areas with conservationist/environmentalist groups. Others noted the increase in traffic and the conflict between locals and tourists in the context of encouraging further usage versus more limited access. Some praiseworthy responses showed a high level of assessment. Discussion was often clear, indicating that economic activities can bring in valuable economic revenue which can be put towards conservation strategies. This was particularly true for tourism where money can be invested in sustainable management of glaciated areas.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.