



AS

Geography

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Report on the examination

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General

This paper continued to prove accessible to most students, with the same mean as the last two years, 47 out of 80. This shows that most centres are confident and familiar with the style of question setting and expectations of this paper.

The majority of students seemed comfortable with what the AO1, AO2 and AO3 Assessment Objectives asked of them. The number of students who appeared unfamiliar with, or unprepared for the paper remained relatively low. Examiners reported very few rubric errors. Like last year most students continued to produce reasonably well-balanced responses for the 9- and 20-mark questions. The average mark was in Level-2 on all 9-mark questions and in Level-3 on all 20-mark questions. It appears that, like last year, most students were aware that only half of the marks on these extended prose questions were for repeating learnt material from class (AO1). Most knew that the remaining marks are for applying this knowledge and understanding to the context of the question (AO2).

AO1 and AO2 both account for 40% of the marks available on this paper, with the remaining 20% allocated to AO3. Gaining many of these AO3 marks still proved challenging for many students. In summary:

AO3 – Use a variety of relevant methods and techniques to:

- *investigate questions and issues*
- *interpret, analyse, and evaluate data and resources*
- *communicate findings*

These skills were tested whenever a stimulus resource was used, or numerical data needed to be engaged with. On this paper this was the 6-mark *skills* question on each option, i.e. 1.4, 2.4, 3.4, 4.4 and 5.4. The main issue here was that many students demonstrated AO2 type answers by applying their knowledge, offering reasons for patterns for example, or too simply lifting data directly from the resource. This was not the question. The command 'analyse' in this context, simply required students to interface with the data, manipulate, and deconstruct the information. Where two resources were provided, for example two maps or two graphs, it is logical, and expected, that responses will seek to identify any links or connections between the information provided.

Question 1

About 57% of students attempted Water and Carbon Cycles, again making this the most popular physical option by a significant margin. This proportion has continued to increase over time. For example, 49% chose it in 2023 and 55% last year.

1.1

This proved to be very straightforward with 84% of students correctly identifying Option D as the correct answer.

1.2

This was equally straightforward with 85% correctly picking D as the correct option.

1.3

This question proved challenging for many. Only 42% of students gained 2 or more marks and 23% scored zero. Most were able to identify evapotranspiration as a transfer to the atmosphere, or an output from a drainage basin. However, many seemed unfamiliar with the term, with few able to state that it was the combination of both evaporation and transpiration.

1.4

This question differentiated well, with a mean mark of 3.85/6. Despite 63% of students scoring in Level 2 only around one third achieved 5 or 6 marks suggesting that many found this question challenging. Many responses failed to go beyond lifting numbers from the figures or very simple description. Responses like this struggled to reach the top of Level 1. It was envisaged that having two relatively straightforward graphs would allow students to make straightforward comparisons and make use of the data, which few did.

The best answers supported their points with clear use and manipulation of data, whilst weaker responses simply lifted values from the figures. Other high-quality answers made explicit attempts to make links between the two figures and give comparisons of the different amounts of carbon stored and the area of the biomes. Although, less of an issue than in some previous series, some responses did quickly drift into explanation of possible reasons for the differences in the size of the carbon stores. This is AO2 and was not valid in this AO3 question.

1.5

This question combined both AO1 and AO2 elements. This required students to make links within the Water and Carbon Cycles specification, with specific reference to human activity and the hydrosphere as a store of carbon. The average mark for this question was 3.9 suggesting that most students found this to be a challenging question. Most were able to identify human activities that affected the carbon cycle in general, the burning of fossil fuels for example, but few seemed familiar with the hydrosphere as a store of carbon.

It was envisaged that accessing Level 2 would be quite straightforward. Responses were required to identify that the burning of fossil fuels and the associated release of CO₂ into the atmosphere was leading to climate change, increasing in atmospheric temperatures and causing the oceans to warm. More CO₂ in the atmosphere is leading to more CO₂ dissolving into the sea, therefore increasing the size of the hydrospheric store of carbon. However, these warmer waters are then less able to absorb/take CO₂ from the atmosphere. Warming may ultimately lead to the oceans becoming a net carbon source rather than carbon sink. The level of specific detail given in support would then determine how far the response could move through the mark scheme to the higher levels.

The 18% of responses that did reach Level 3 often exhibited excellent knowledge and understanding of the various chemical processes at work as human activities impacted the carbon cycle. Some also assessed how attempts at mitigating climate change could also impact the hydrosphere, for example utilising the deep oceans to sequester excess carbon.

1.6

This question proved very accessible and around 75% of students provided clear and /or detailed responses achieving in Level 3 or higher. These generally scored well with respect to AO1, with clear and detailed knowledge of specific human activities happening in a specific named tropical rainforest. Clearly some responses failed to go beyond making sweeping statements about whole continental scale forests, for example “deforestation in the Amazon leads to increased runoff.” However, some gave very clear details about specific locations within a named rainforest and were able to quantify the impacts of the human activity, for example naming specific dams and the impact they had had on the discharge of a river, or changes in specific rates of evapotranspiration. There were many interesting case studies used to support answers and most did focus on the Amazon.

Some students struggled as they had little focus on specific aspects of the water cycle, with limited knowledge and understanding shown of specific inputs, flows, stores, and outputs.

Question 2

About 37% of students attempted Coastal Systems and Landscapes, an almost identical proportion to last year.

2.1

This proved very easy with 85% of students correctly identifying Option B as the correct answer.

2.2

This differentiated quite well and 63% correctly selected Option C.

2.3

This question performed well but proved challenging for some students. 34% achieved full marks, whilst 16% scored zero and the mean was 1.79/3. The best responses clearly understood the process of longshore/littoral drift and offered a succinct sequential answer. These responses generally started with the idea that waves approach the coast from the same direction as the prevailing wind. With the swash picking up material and moving it up the beach in the same direction and backwash returning sediment perpendicularly back down the beach due to gravity. The process repeats as the next incoming wave picks up the sediment again, causing a *zig-zag* motion of sediment along the coast. Some responses were limited either due to lack of knowledge and understanding or by being poorly expressed.

2.4

Like the other AO3 skills questions on the paper, this proved challenging for some students. The mean mark was 3.48/6. Less than 16% of responses achieved 5 or 6 marks. Very few went beyond making very basic descriptive statements with data lifted from the figure. Responses like this struggled to reach the top of Level 1. It was envisaged that students would be able to clearly see that in some parts of Europe, sea levels had risen relative to the land and in others it had fallen. This would have allowed for clear comparisons to be made. The extent to which a response could then move through the higher level would be determined by the level of map detail and manipulation of data used in support.

The weakest responses did not show that they understood that the map showed the rise and fall of sea levels. Others showed little understanding of the data, making statements like “much of Finland had -4.0 fall in sea level”. Other responses did not score well as they quickly drifted into explanation or possible reasons for proportions of people at risk in different scenarios. This constituted AO2 and therefore was not valid in this AO3 question.

The best responses had evidence of detailed use of map skills and clear handling of the numerical data.

2.5

This question combined both AO1 and AO2 elements. This required students to make links within the Coastal Systems and Landscapes specification, with specific reference to mass movement and coastal landforms. The average mark for this question was only 4.07/9 and only 17% achieved marks in the Level 3 range. This suggests that many found this question to be very challenging. For many the issue seemed to be a lack of familiarity with the concept of mass movement. Many confused this with processes of erosion, weathering, or transportation and so often struggled to move out of Level 1.

Better responses often had clear understanding of processes, such as rotational slumping and had accurate descriptions. However, these often did not then make a link to the shaping of landforms. Answers such as this generally got stuck in Level 2. The best responses gave clear and detailed understanding of more than one mass movement process and made explicit links to how the process affected the shape of specific landforms. Some responses sought to assess the role of mass movement compared to other processes. This was credit worthy, although to score well, there still needed to be knowledge and understanding of mass movement as that was the specification area that the question was targeting.

Although not explicitly asked for in the question, many good responses had illustration from specific local-scale coastal examples. This often enhanced the quality of the answer.

2.6

This question differentiated well, but many found it to be quite challenging. 54% of students were able to produce good answers and reached Level 3 or 4. The mean mark was only 10.62 out of 20, suggesting that only a small proportion were able to provide the clarity or detail required to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme. The best answers showed clear knowledge and understanding of the sea level change associated with the most current interglacial period. These differentiated clearly between places that have experienced eustatic sea level rise and those that have experienced isostatic rebound/uplift. Often these were then illustrated with clear details of specific case study examples of emergent and submergent features.

Many answers showed little clear knowledge and understanding of the above. Weaker responses struggled with the temporal aspect of the question, with some only writing about potential future sea level change.

Question 3

Only 6% of students attempted Glacial Systems and Landscapes, down from 9% last year. This continues to be the least popular physical option by far. In 2023 12% of students chose this option.

3.1

I was impressive to see that all students identified Option A as a pingo.

3.2

This was also found to be straight forward with 97% identifying B as the correct option.

3.3

This question proved to be accessible to most students, with a mean of 2.23 and around half of responses achieving full marks. However, it did differentiate quite well as just over 14% scored zero. For those familiar with ice wedges the question proved straightforward, and they gave clear and succinct responses, with specific processes and a clear sequence identified and described.

3.4

This AO3 skills question again proved challenging for some, although it did differentiate quite well and about two thirds of responses reached Level 2. The mean mark was 3.86 out of 6. Many responses failed to go beyond lifting data from the figures or very simple description. Responses like this struggled to reach the top of Level 1. It was envisaged that having two relatively straightforward maps would allow students to make straightforward comparisons and make use of the data, which few did.

The best responses had evidence of detailed use of map skills and clear handling of the numerical data.

3.5

With a mean mark of 5.43 out of 9 and almost 1/3 of students reaching Level 3, this question provided accessible to many. Most were able to identify meltwater as having the capacity to erode, transport and deposit material, hence creating new landforms. Many responses focused on eskers, kames, and the outwash plain, showing clear knowledge and understanding of the specification content. The very best responses engaged with how the role of meltwater in their formation made these landforms distinctive. For example, being composed of smoothed and rounded material, or having evidence of sorting of material.

A relatively small number of responses confused fluvioglacial landforms with periglacial landforms and therefore did not score well.

3.6

This question differentiated well, but many found it quite challenging. 63% of students were able to produce good answers and reached Level 3 or higher. The mean mark was only 10.8 out of 20, suggesting that only a small proportion were able to provide the clarity or detail required to reach the very highest levels of the mark scheme. The best answers fully understood the question and gave plenty of detail about the extent of cold environments in

the past, mostly focusing on the time since the last glacial maximum about 20,000 years before present. These responses often gave the view that, at this time, cold environments had covered very considerable areas of the Earth, and that this area has been decreasing ever since. For those that fully targeted the question, they then gave an account of how the extent of most cold environments is likely to decrease in the future due to current and future climate change. Only the very best suggested that the extent of periglacial environments may in fact extend before decreasing.

As is quite often the case on the Cold Environments 20-mark question, a significant number of students wanted to give a rehearsed human geography answer to this physical geography question. For example, many talked about negative economic and social impacts of global warming on Swiss ski resorts. Unless answers like this explicitly referred to aspects such as shrinking glaciers or rising snow lines it was difficult for these to gain much credit even in Level 2. Likewise, responses that took Alaska as their inspiration, often gave a rehearsed response about the challenges this environment poses to people living there, and without reference to the changing sizes of glaciers or areas of permafrost etc, these too struggled to gain credit.

Question 4

Hazards again proved to be the most popular of the two People and the Environment options, with 85% of students attempting it. This is an even further increase of the proportion choosing this option than in previous series.

4.1

This question proved produced a high success rate as 98% correctly identified Option D.

4.2

This question proved to be surprisingly difficult. Only 29% of students correctly identified D as an island arc. The vast majority chose B, which described a chain of islands associated with a hotspot. Examiners were surprised by this as island arcs are explicitly named on the specification, but island chains associated with hot spots are not.

4.3

This question differentiated well. About one third of students scored 3 out of 3. The best answers gave succinct clear points about specific conditions leading to the formation of tropical storms. For some though tropical storms appeared unfamiliar which was surprising.

4.4

As in other series and on other parts of this paper, this AO3 skills question proved quite challenging for many. The mean mark was 3.23, but only 13% scored 5 or 6 marks. Those scoring well, confidently used and manipulated evidence from the maps. It was envisaged that having two relatively straightforward maps would allow students to make straightforward comparisons and make use of the data, which few did.

Some weaker responses appeared to struggle with the concept of population density and so responses became confusing or unclear as they suggested, for instance, that 6,000 people lived in Bangkok. Inevitably, other responses that did not score well, again appeared

unprepared for these AO3 skills questions, and sought to explain or give reasons for the data, which would be AO2 content and so therefore not credit worthy.

4.5

This question proved to be quite challenging for many and had a mean score of only 4.35. Only 13% of responses achieved Level 3. Only the very best responses had clear and detailed knowledge and understanding of an appropriate wildfire event, whilst identifying that this was *across specification* question, requiring application of knowledge and understanding from the Changing Places unit. Where the link was identified the best responses identified specific economic, social, demographic, or environmental characteristics of place that had been impacted by the wildfire event. Many responses often did not focus on the impacts at the scale of the local place, i.e. referring to the “Black Saturday Bushfires in Australia,” and whilst most did identify impacts, it was hard to see any link to specific characteristics of place.

There were some excellent responses that focused on specific impacts of fires in Fort McMurray or more recently in California, where individual neighbourhoods or areas were given as exemplar material.

Other responses sought to compare different wildfires. These often did not score well as depth was often lost with this approach.

4.6

This question proved more accessible and differentiated well, with a mean of 12.74. Nearly 75% of responses reached Level 3 and over 25% scored in Level 4. The best responses showed clear and detailed knowledge and understanding of specific risks in a specific multi-hazard environment and made some attempt to differentiate between attempts to mitigate and adapt. Some weaker responses came from students who did not appear to have a clear case study of a specific multi-hazardous environment. As with Q4.5 above, many students made comparisons between 2 case studies, which could be creditworthy, however, the specification is clear that only one case study is required. Some weaker responses compared the case studies rather than explicitly targeting the question.

Question 5

Only 15% of students attempted Contemporary Urban Environments. This is a decrease compared to other recent series, where about 20% chose this option.

5.1

This proved to be very straightforward with 86% of students correctly identifying Option B as the correct answer.

5.2

This differentiated quite well with 68% correctly selecting Option D.

5.3

This question proved straightforward for most students. The mean mark was 2.42 and 60% scored 3 out of 3. The majority of students were able to easily identify two or more changes

that have occurred in gentrified areas. A minority of students focused on generic redevelopment or regeneration, rather than explicitly focusing on impacts resulting from gentrification.

5.4

As in other series and on other parts of this paper, this AO3 skills question proved to be quite challenging for many. The mean mark was 3.57, but only 20% score 5 or 6. Those scoring well, confidently used and manipulated evidence from the maps. It was envisaged that having two relatively straightforward maps would allow students to make straightforward comparisons and make use of the data, which few did. The link or connection between the two maps was quite obvious, and encouraged responses to be comparative. However, many responses struggled to go beyond lifting and basic description.

Some responses did not engage with the key on Figure 5a. The best responses confidently talked about areas that were warmer and cooler than the mean. Whilst others were quite poorly expressed, and were confused for example, describing central Staten Island as having a temperature of minus 4.

Other responses that did not score well appeared unprepared for these AO3 skills questions, and sought to explain or give reasons for the data, which would be AO2 content and so therefore not credit worthy.

5.5

This question differentiated well and many provided good quality answers. The mean mark was 5.47 out of 9 and 30% scored in Level 3. The best responses had clear knowledge and understanding of specific environmental problems in a named urban area, whilst identifying that this was the *cross specification* question requiring application of knowledge and understanding from the Changing Places unit. Where the link was identified, the best responses had very specific environment problems, e.g. air pollution, poor waste management or even excessive summer heat, and were able to make clear links to specific impacts on aspects of peoples' lives.

Answers that did not score well were often quite generic or lacked any clear attempt to link the environmental problems to the lives of people and their experience of the named urban area. A very significant number of responses tried to compare 1 urban area to another. This could score credit. However, this approach made it difficult for students to develop the specific detail required for the higher level. Focusing on just one urban area, would have allowed scope for more specific detail to be developed.

5.6

Like other 20-mark questions this differentiated quite well, with a mean of 12.23 and over 70% reached Level 3 or higher. The best answers showed clear and/or detailed knowledge and understanding of the urban water cycle, and explicitly referred to specific inputs, flows, stores, and outputs in the cycle. Many of these responses noted how urban areas influence precipitation, infiltration rates and then levels of overland flow. Others linked aspects of the urban heat island effect to rates of evaporation and then possible links to thunderstorms. There were some responses that looked at the impact of urban areas on different stores of

water, for example the impact of abstraction on ground water. These could all score well, as long as there was also clear and detailed assessment.

Although, the question did not require a case study, many of the best responses did support their points with reference to named locations. This often added to the quality of the AO1 element of the answer.

Some appeared to try to give a rehearsed response about specific examples of SUDs or river restoration. This was credit worthy as long as there was a clear attempt to target aspects of the water cycle.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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