



AS LEVEL GEOGRAPHY

7036/1 Physical geography and people and the environment
Report on the Examination

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General

The paper proved accessible to most students. The majority of students were comfortable with what the assessment objectives expected of them. Those who appeared unfamiliar with, or unprepared for, the expectations of the AO1, AO2 and AO3 assessment objectives was noticeably fewer than in previous series. In particular, students produced more balanced responses to the 9- and 20-mark questions, where the available marks are distributed evenly between the AO1 and AO2 assessment objectives. On these extended prose questions, it was clear that an increased number of students were aware that half of the marks were available for demonstrating subject knowledge and understanding (AO1), and that the remaining marks were only awarded when this knowledge and understanding was applied in the direction specified by the question (AO2).

AO1 and AO2 each 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

AO3 skills were tested whenever a stimulus resource or numerical data were presented. On this paper this was the 6-mark skills question on each option, ie 1.4, 2.4, 3.4, 4.4 and 5.4. The main issue here was that many students wrote out AO2 type answers, by applying their knowledge (offering reasons for patterns for example), or they simply lifted data directly from the resource. This was not appropriate. The command 'analyse', in this context, required students to interface with the data, manipulate and deconstruct the information.

Far fewer students made rubric errors, suggesting that most were familiar with the structure of the paper.

Question 1

About 49% of the students attempted Water and Carbon Cycles, making this the most popular physical option by a significant margin.

1.1 and 1.2

These multiple-choice questions proved straightforward the great majority of students answering correctly.

1.3

Most students performed well on this question. Around three quarters of responses gained 2 or more marks, with very few students scoring no marks. Most were able to accurately identify the major stores of water and elaborate on their nature or scale, and the state water is stored in. Some students overlooked the oceans as a major store of water.

1.4

This AO3 skills question proved very challenging for many students. An exceptionally small number of students recognised, understood or were able to engage with the logarithmic scale on the y-axis. This obviously then limited their ability to analyse the data with much accuracy or clarity. Surprisingly few responses stated that the figure showed a change over time and that every line indicated a continuing increase in emissions.

The best answers supported their points with clear use and manipulation of data, whilst weaker responses simply lifted values from the graph. Few went beyond basic description of the data, with very few using or manipulating data in a more sophisticated manner. Other responses did not score well as they quickly drifted into explanation or possible reasons for the changes in CO₂ emissions, this is AO2 and 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. Students had to make an evidence base assessment of the potential scale of the impact of future human intervention in the carbon cycle on major stores of carbon. Scrutiny of a sample of scripts prior to the main marking period indicated that very few students had interpreted “human intervention in the carbon cycle” as it is framed in the specification. The expectation was that students would evaluate positive actions by people to mitigate carbon transfers in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Whilst the highest level of the mark scheme was reserved for such answers, credit was awarded for evaluation of accurate and specific human activities having an effect on major stores of carbon.

Following the approach to marking outlined above, meant most students were rewarded for demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of a range of human activities that affect the carbon cycle and impact on the major stores. With around 2/3 of responses reaching Level 3 many students were able to give clear evaluation with some detailed support. As has been the case in previous series on questions on the carbon cycle, some weaker responses were limited by a lack of differentiation between the different states of carbon in different stores, and often simply referred to “CO₂”, when it would have been more accurate to simply refer to carbon.

1.6

Over 2/3 of students engaged well with this question, providing clear responses achieving marks in Level 3 or higher. These students generally scored well with respect to AO1, with clear and detailed knowledge of possible future climate change and specific detail from their local scale river catchment. The key to scoring well with respect to AO2 was the quality and clarity of the judgements made about the extent to which possible future climate change will have specific impacts on the named catchment. Some of the best responses supported their points with details about possible climate change predictions for the area of their named river catchment, and showed accurate knowledge and understanding of how this might affect the specific flood risk or future water supply there.

Some assessed the extent to which other factors are significant in the flood risk or water supply in the catchment. This was valid, as long as these were assessed relative to the possible impact of climate change. Unlike in some previous series the majority of students did use an appropriate “local” scale example, which helped students achieve well.

Question 2

Around 40% of the students attempted Coastal Systems and Landscapes.

2.1 and 2.2

Both of these multiple-choice questions were answered well by students.

2.3

This question proved challenging for many students with only a small proportion achieving full marks. Most students had some understanding of material being put down or left behind. However, many focused on the transport of sediment, or described differences between constructive and destructive waves, which was not the thrust of the question.

2.4

Like the other AO3 skills questions on the paper, this proved very challenging for most students. Few students went beyond making very basic descriptive points about individual points or lines on the graph. The best answers supported their points with clear use and manipulation of data. These also showed clear understanding of the data, ie that it showed how the various sea areas' temperatures were changing relative to the average global temperature. Only the best answers began to use terms such as cooler/warmer than the mean etc. Many responses did not score well as they quickly drifted into explanation or possible reasons for the changes in temperature; this is AO2 and not creditable in this AO3 question.

2.5

The majority of students reached Level 2 or higher in this question. The best answers gave clear assessment and supported their points with good specific details. These responses clearly understood the nature of saltmarshes (and mudflats), their position and the importance of the different processes affecting them. These good responses also showed clear knowledge and understanding of sea level change, and were able to assess how specific changes, ie a +1m rise in sea level by 2100, would impact on saltmarshes. Weaker responses showed little knowledge and understanding of salt marshes, or of recent, predicted or theoretical changes in sea level.

2.6

Around 2/3 of students were able to access this question well and produce good answers reaching Level 3 or better. A smaller proportion had the clarity or detail required to reach Level 4 of the mark scheme. The best answers focused on specific local scale, named places. Meaning they were able to give clear specific details about the possible future flood and erosion issues, and specific management strategies. Many answers showed little clear knowledge and understanding of the concept of sustainable coastal management, as presented in the specification, as distinct from traditional approaches of hard and soft engineering. The best answers engaged with this concept well and often referred to sustainable coastal management being the central theme of ICZM and SMPs. Some responses were limited by use of exemplification and illustration at an inappropriate scale.

Question 3

About 12% of the students attempted Glacial Systems and Landscapes - a similar proportion to 2022.

3.1 and 3.2

The great majority of students answered these multiple-choice questions accurately.

3.3

This question proved accessible to most, with more than half of students scoring full marks. Those who were clearly familiar with warm based glaciers found the question straightforward and gave clear and succinct responses, with specific features accurately identified and described.

3.4

This AO3 skills question proved challenging for many students, with many unable to reach Level 2. Few students went beyond making very basic descriptive points about individual points or lines on the graph. The best answers supported their points with clear use and manipulation of data. These also showed clear understanding of the data, ie that it showed how the various glaciers have changed over time relative to their mass in 1945. Many students failed to spot that 3 of the glaciers had more ice than in 1945 and 3 had less, and that those with less ice were losing ice at a rapid rate. Here again responses did not score well where they drifted into explanation or possible reasons for the changes in ice mass; this is AO2 and not creditable in this AO3 question.

3.5

Most students were able to accurately identify specific landforms associated with landscapes that had once been glacial and were able to clearly assess the role played by processes of erosion in their formation. Some responses remained in lower levels as they did not go beyond describing the features and formation of the landforms, rather than assessing the role of erosion. Although weathering does play a role in the formation of many landforms, a number identified nivation as a process of erosion.

3.6

This question saw some good responses. The best answers focused on specific and appropriate named places. This meant that they were able to give clear specific details about the possible future challenges and opportunities for peoples' lives in that environment. Some responses were limited by generic sweeping statements about very large geographical areas, or focused on impacts on the environment without reference to the future lives of the people. The best answers had a clear understanding of specific details of possible future climate change in their chosen cold environment. Some responses were limited by use of exemplification and illustration from examples that were a little dated or were lacking in awareness of what the lives of people living in cold environments are like in the 21st Century.

Question 4

About 80% of the students attempted Hazards. This is the same proportion as in 2022.

4.1 ad 4.2

Most students answered these multiple-choice questions correctly.

4.3

This question differentiated well. Just over 1/3 of students scored full marks. Where the Hazard Management Cycle was familiar to students they were able to give clear and succinct statements about the continuous nature of the model. Where experience of the impacts and success or otherwise of any responses could be reflected on and lessons learned to inform the response to future hazard events with the ultimate aim of mitigating impacts. Those less familiar with the Hazard Management Cycle often gave lists of terms relating to responding to hazards.

4.4

This AO3 skills question proved quite challenging for many students and very few reached Level 2. Those scoring well confidently used and manipulated the data from the key, easily making comparisons between to the two maps and analysing the changing patterns and distributions. Many struggled with the uneven scale clearly set out on both figures. The best responses were often also able to make succinct clear links between the two figures, identifying changes in distribution, pattern and proportions of populations killed by natural hazards. The weakest answers rarely went beyond lifting values from the figures and seemed unprepared to engage with data presented on a world map. Many struggled to describe the geographical distribution with appropriate cartographic or geographical terminology or references to regions or groups of countries. Similar to other AO3 skills questions, some students sought to explain and give reasons for the data, which was AO2 content and so therefore did not gain any credit.

4.5

The majority of students were able to reach Level 2 or higher on this question. The best responses had clear knowledge and understanding of an appropriate recent earthquake event, whilst identifying that this was the 'across specification link' question requiring application of knowledge and understanding from the Changing Places unit. Where the link was identified the best responses identified 2 or more specific endogenous factors, including socioeconomic or cultural characteristics of the place, or aspects of its physical geography. The importance of these specific factors was then evaluated in relation to the specific earthquake event, with clear details in support. Answers that did not score well, either lacked an appropriate case study, or confused endogenous and exogenous factors.

4.6

The best responses on this question showed a clear understanding of the concept of the Park Model. They were able to give balanced accounts of how the quality of life was affected by a named recent wildfire event. Many of these responses gave clear assessment of the extent to which the changes in quality of life that were experienced followed the pattern suggested by the model. The best answers gave perceptive assessment of specific impacts of the wildfire and how they affected the quality of life of the people there. Some did make comparisons between one wildfire and another, and as long as the purpose of this was to explicitly address the statement in

the stem of the question this was creditable. Many weaker responses suggested some students were unfamiliar with the Park Model. Where students' case study knowledge was weak, it was difficult for them to make clear assessment of how specific aspects of quality of life were affected, but some did offer some suggestions of how it might have changed.

Question 5

About 20% of the students attempted Contemporary Urban Environments.

5.1 and 5.2

Both of these multiple-choice questions were answered well by students.

5.3

Where the term cultural and heritage quarters was familiar to students, they were able to give clear succinct statements about the characteristics of such areas, often with an illustrative example. Weaker responses often made general statements about ethnicity or religion, showing little relevant knowledge.

5.4

This AO3 skills question proved quite challenging for many students. Those scoring well confidently used and manipulated the data from the key, easily making comparisons between to the two maps and analysing the changing patterns and distributions. Many struggled with the scale, even though it was a straightforward percentage scale. The best responses were also able to make succinct clear links between the two figures, identifying changes in distribution, pattern and proportions of people living in urban environments. The weakest answers rarely went beyond lifting values from the figures and seemed unprepared to engage with data presented on a world map. Many struggled to describe the geographical distribution with appropriate cartographic or geographical terminology or references to regions or groups of countries. Similar to other AO3 skills questions, some students sought to explain and give reasons for the data, which was AO2 content and so therefore did not gain any credit.

5.5

This question differentiated well, with a mean mark of 5.27 and over 80% of students getting into Level 2 or higher, and over 30% managing to score in Level 3. The best responses had clear knowledge and understanding of an appropriate specific urban area, whilst identifying that this was the across specification link question requiring application of knowledge and understanding from the Changing Places unit. Where the link was identified, the best responses identified 2 or more specific processes of development, for example industrialisation and deindustrialisation. The importance of these specific factors was then evaluated in relation to atmospheric pollution, with clear details in support. Answers that did not score well, either lacked an appropriate case study, or lacked focus on specific processes in the specific place.

5.6

The best responses to this question showed a clear understanding of the concept of ecological footprint. They gave balanced accounts of how levels of consumption of certain commodities will increase in the future, so may increase an urban area's footprint, whilst efforts may be made to

reduce consumption of resources such as fossil fuels and manage waste more effectively, may reduce the footprint. Many of these responses, suggested that the balance between a possible future increase or decrease was dependent on factors such as demographics, current level of economic development, and current and future levels of industrialisation and urbanisation. Such responses highlighted the importance of the need for timely decisions to be made by policy makers sooner rather than later. Many weaker responses indicated that some students were unfamiliar with the concept of ecological footprint. Some concession was allowed and examiners did award credit where they could see assessment of specific environmental issues in the named example.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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