

GCSE

Geography A

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J382**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A731/01 Contemporary themes in geography (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

Most candidates were able to demonstrate reasonable knowledge and understanding of the key ideas and concepts of this unit. Candidates with good subject knowledge and those who were able to apply their understanding of the unit scored highly. Candidates who did well also adapted what they knew to the demands of the question rather than writing everything they knew on a specific topic. A further area of differentiation between those that did well and those that did not was linked to ability to understand key words especially those that were linked to physical processes, such as exfoliation or formation of fold mountains. Exam technique in the longer questions is important. A number of candidates come up with 5 or 6 ideas but write one sentence about each producing an answer that reads like a list. A better technique would be to choose one or two ideas and develop each as fully as possible to reach the higher levels. Some candidates produced a bullet point list in response to the levels marked questions and this generally limited their answers to level 1.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar make up a significant number of marks on the paper and it was clear that most candidates were aware of this. There were some scripts in poor handwriting which can limit the mark when it is impossible to decipher whether the spelling of key words is correct. There was a significant proportion of answers left blank especially longer questions towards the end of the paper.

Comments on Individual Questions

- Q1 Deserts was a well-known area of the specification but some candidates struggled to give good answers to the parts of the question that needed them to adjust their response to match the wording of the question.
- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to label the two deserts correctly. A few mixed them up and there were a few answers that were left blank.
- (ii) This question required candidates to select the correct option from the table. This was answered well. The most common mistake was selecting the top option that placed deserts within 5° of the Equator.
- (iii) Failure to understand the keyword 'reason' meant that this question was not well answered. There were a lot of answers that described the location, incorrectly stating it was on the equator or copying out the answer to the previous question. Some responses focussed on providing characteristics that more closely matched the equator such as rising air or concentrated sun's rays.
- (b) The temperature part of this question was answered more successfully than the rainfall part. Candidates were able to contrast the day-time and night-time temperatures using appropriate figures to back up their answers. There were a few candidates who stated that they were 'hot' which did not gain any credit as this was stated in the question. The rainfall part of the answer was less well answered as fewer candidates were able to quote a figure of 'less than 250mm per year' and only received credit for saying that it was dry. More complex answers considered the idea of heavy localised rain leading to flash floods. A minority of candidates explained why they were dry or hot using ideas from the previous question.
- (c) (i) This was mostly answered correctly.
- (ii) This was mostly answered correctly although a significant minority answered 'hard rock'.
- (iii) There was confusion between all three terms in this question.
- (d) This question was not well answered and the term exfoliation was frequently misunderstood. A lot of candidates left this question blank. Some wrote about erosion, describing how abrasion forms rock pedestals whilst other made basic comments about rocks breaking. The best answers recognised the power of both heating and cooling, linked to the loss of the outer layer of the rock.
- (e) The candidates that were awarded the highest marks understood the word 'impacts' and were able to write in detail about possible impacts that might occur. Level 1 answers usually described what was happening in the photos with no mention of the impacts that the nomads/ tourists or energy production may cause. Simple ideas such as litter, with no further detail, were also Level 1. Level 2 answers were usually imbalanced with a developed answer for either one of the two uses but not both. The best answers were those that dealt with both uses equally and used specific language. Phrases such as 'disrupts the environment' and 'kills the desert' were used too frequently. A minority of candidates wrote about impacts that were not based in the desert. An example of this is the idea that emissions from the power plant may cause climate change and coastal flooding.

- Q2 Candidates seemed to have a good knowledge and understanding of mountain environments and how they are used by people. Answers were well written but could have had a greater use of geographical language.
- (a) Most candidates were able to identify some of the challenges that might occur in the Andes mountain range in South America. The difference in the quality of answers was very closely linked to level of detail in the explanation. A level 1 answer often read like a list with candidates providing multiple ideas, such as cold, remote and lacking vegetation but with no further explanation as why a cold place might be extreme. The candidates that were awarded level 2 were able to take an idea like high altitude and explain why it is extreme by linking it to the effects on people, such as difficulty breathing. To reach level 3 the same idea would have to be developed again for example referring to low oxygen levels or altitude sickness.
- (b) The answers that were expected for this question were linked to Himalayan style collision boundary but it was clear that the term can also link to subduction style plate boundaries and this was taken into consideration. The best answers were able to go beyond plates moving together and pushing upward and gave a full and detailed understanding of the whole process. Diagrams usually covered the same points as the text and were poorly or unlabelled so they were difficult both to interpret and to award credit.
- (c) This question was usually well answered but copying the resource with no further detail will not be awarded marks.
- (d) This question was also well answered although there was a wide range of resources stated. To get the second mark candidates had to be clear how the resource was used. The most common error was stating that the resource was ice and that it could be melted for water but not stating what people might do with the water.
- (e) The question asked candidates to consider the positive and negative impacts of tourism in a mountain environment. Candidates that reached level 3 provided relevant developed statements about both positive and negative impacts and wrote about the mountain environment that they had studied. They did not make generic statements that could refer to any mountain/tourism area. It is not enough to just state the name of the place; place-specific details such as Sherpas must be added. The impacts must be linked to the mountain environment and not to ideas such as climate change. Level 2 answers generally were either unbalanced or generic. Candidates that did not understand the key word 'impact' or provided an answer that was very basic, even just one word, achieved level 1. There were some very broad statements such as 'disrupt the environment' or 'breaks the economy' that were not credited.

- Q3 Most candidates were well-versed in their knowledge of multi-national corporations and the issues that are associated with being a global citizen. However, not all were able to apply their knowledge correctly to the specific situations given in the question
- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to grasp the idea that they were in many countries or all around the world. A few candidates provided answers that were too general using phrases such as ‘all over the place’.
- (ii) This question was well answered and it was clear candidates knew this area of the course thoroughly.
- (iii) This question was less well answered as candidates focused on the benefits for the LEDC such as more jobs rather than the reasons a TNC might locate in a LEDC such as larger market share.
- (b) (i) This question was answered well when candidates were clear what their chosen product was. Answers that dealt with phones, clothing and coffee were the best with knowledge of mining for coltan in the Democratic Republic of Congo and manufacturing by Foxconn in Shenzhen particularly popular. Candidates were also able to provide reasons why these locations are chosen. Brands were identified by their most popular product so it was assumed that when a candidate wrote Apple they meant a mobile phone but it would be better if candidates could be more precise.
- (ii) The key word ‘consumption’ was not well understood and this limited the quality of the answers that candidates provided. When the word was understood most candidates were able to link consumption to MEDCs where they can afford the cost of mobile phones or high priced electrical goods. Answers that named specific locations where the product might be consumed were the clearest. Some candidates thought consumption must be linked to a food product and a smaller minority changed product between the two parts of the question.
- (iii) It was clear that candidates had studied this area in depth and the answers given reflected this. The best answers dealt with the conditions of miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo, mobile phone factories in China or sweat shops in SE Asia. The level of detail included the awareness that mobile phone factories in China had to be clean but the work was repetitive and had led to a number of suicides.
- (c) Answers awarded the highest marks dealt with one scheme that students had studied. Ideas such as FairTrade provided a focus for the answer with candidates being able to give details of the scheme and its effect on the workers. The answers that did not gain as much credit tended to be unfocused and gave general statements about what the candidate might do without linking them to any scheme leading to a series of unconnected and disjointed statements.

- Q4 Candidates struggled with the energy question as they did not seem to be able to state the energy issue that they had studied so fewer marks were awarded.
- (a) (i) Most candidates answered this question successfully.
(ii) Candidates interpreted the cartoon successfully and provided some good answers that focussed on the use of energy and the potential air pollution that could be caused by manufacturing in China. Some candidates made statements such as 'China's energy use is increasing' which is not shown in the cartoon.
- (b) (i) A number of candidates struggled to name an energy issue and that made it very difficult to credit their answers. Successful candidates knew their issue, such as increasing carbon dioxide emissions, and could write about increasing use of renewable energy and the construction of wind farms. Fracking was also a popular answer with answers focussing on the need for meetings to discuss the issue and the implementation of fracking despite public concern.
(ii) The key to success in this question was having a clear idea of the energy issue or its management. Ideas about nuclear power stations, fracking and wind farms were particularly well written, tending to score highly. Candidates were very clear about the environmental consequences of fracking and the impact on the water table. The best answers were very specific about what the effect on people might be and the effect on the environment, often starting each paragraph with the phrase 'The effect on people is...' The question asked for suggestions about the future so any reasoned ideas were accepted. To reach level 3 the answers needed to be balanced between the two parts of the question. Level 2 answers were often unbalanced with the focus of the answer was one of the two sections whilst level 1 answers were full of general statements that could be linked to any issue. A large minority of candidates did not attempt this question.

- Q5 The similarities and differences in settlements and population was an area where candidates displayed knowledge but were let down by not using key words or concepts to help them reach the higher marks.
- (a) (i) Most candidates answered this question successfully although a small minority mixed up village and hamlet.
 - (b) (i) Candidates that knew that a mega city has a population of ten million or more were awarded the mark.
(ii) The first mark was for identifying the change and the second was for using data as stated in the question. Candidates that were able to interpret the diagram using specific facts from the resource (eg identifying one specific city and stating the change that has occurred or looking at the overall increase in cities) were awarded the highest marks. .
(iii) The question is very specific about identifying one change so only the first idea was credited. Candidates needed to link their answer to why cities grow, such as an increase in migration or increase in the birth rate. When the candidate had identified one of those concepts they could then add a reason for the process. Most candidates were able to identify a reason, such as lack of contraception, but were not able to link it to why a city might grow.
 - (c) If candidates were able to identify their place clearly then they were able to gain two marks by making general statements of similarities or differences. Some candidates stated their place was a city such as Mumbai, which limited their mark whilst other candidates wrote about their local place but made no attempt to compare them with Shanghai. To reach the higher marks candidates needed to use place specific detail about their place, for instance, naming a park or the ancient part of their place.
 - (d) The best answers were those that were specific about push and pull factors and those that were clear about whether they referred to the rural or urban areas. Far too often the statements were vague such as 'densely populated' or 'better life' and these did not gain credit.
 - (e) The candidates that were able to identify an issue clearly were awarded the marks but there was a large minority who wrote statements such as 'the bigger the population, the more likely there is to a problem'. No marks can be awarded if the candidate does not address the issues by giving specific details in their answers. The best answers dealt with problems linked to the need for increased services.

- Q6 Population issues in China were not widely understood and there was a high number of scripts with no response. Naming a population issue led to a wide range of answers from candidates. Those that gave a clear issue scored highly. . It was clear that some candidates had studied the One Child Policy in detail and knew a lot about how it worked.
- (a) (i) Most candidates understood the point about more people of working age correctly but there was a split for the second mark between the correct answer and the idea of having a youthful population.
- (ii) A lot of candidates were able to identify that the population was aging giving specific details from the population pyramid to back up the point that they were trying to make. Some candidates referred to the pyramid showing a youthful population which came from the previous question. The original idea was that references to birth and death rate would not be credited but there were a lot of answers that candidates provided which touch on these points so they were included in the mark scheme.
- (b) Candidates who they were clear what the population issue that they were referring to was scored well on this question. Most candidates referred to issues with over-population and the shortage of resources that this may bring. The second most popular answer referred to having an elderly population which solicited some good responses.
- (c) This question again worked best when the candidate was clear about the issue. Most had been taught about the One Child Policy in China and this led to some good answers that scored highly. Some candidates became confused and referred to the Indian One Child Policy or the Japanese One Child Policy which limited the mark that they were awarded. Other candidates struggled to name a policy and this meant that their answers were non-specific and could not be awarded higher marks.
- SPAG The best marks were awarded to candidates who were able to use key words accurately, spelling them correctly. The most common misspelt words were environment and government. The candidates who did well used commas and apostrophes correctly as well as using full stops and capital letters appropriately. Answers that flowed logically from point to point reflected the correct use of grammar so that the answer read fluently.

A731/02 Contemporary themes in geography (Higher Tier)

General Comments

The paper generally differentiated well. The most able candidates were able to express their geographical knowledge and understanding using place specific detail in their answers, especially on levelled questions. Weaker candidates misinterpreted some of the more complex questions and consequently only partially responded to what they were being asked to do.

The quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar as one would expect from Higher Tier candidates, was awarded at either 2 or 3 marks.

Appropriate use of resources was made by most candidates.

Where questions required extended responses some candidates were able to achieve the depth and development needed to reach level 3. However, level 2 responses were more common and answers included 'theoretical'/'generalised' content. Many candidates struggled to provide really clear and effective linkages between the content of their explanation and their response to 'what extent,' 'how far,' and 'the impact of'.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

a i) The majority of candidates could not name these deserts. Desert A was most commonly incorrectly identified as the Sahara desert.

a ii) Most candidates answered this effectively.

b) This was answered poorly with the most common response stating that deserts were dry due to there being no precipitation. In correct responses candidates wrote most commonly about rain shadow or high pressure systems. Cold ocean currents and trade winds were less frequent explanations.

c) Well answered. Generally candidates seemed to have a good awareness of the conditions in a desert; most often it was the Sahara desert that was named. Many responses explained the diurnal nature of the temperature and then added a comment about lack of rainfall. Some weaker candidates failed, however, to recognise that they needed to use statistics and some of the rainfall statistics quoted were dubious. There was some confusion between the requirements of sections b and c so a few candidates repeated their responses to both.

d i) Many candidates achieved two marks by identifying physical processes associated with the features seen in the photograph. Abrasion, freeze/thaw and exfoliation were most common. Better candidates went on to develop ideas of differential erosion and linked the processes to named features.

Weaker responses tended to just say that the picture shows desertification or lack of vegetation. Some candidates wrote at length about the formation of sand dunes which were not visible in the resource photograph.

d ii) Most candidates could successfully identify who was featured in the resource photographs and a significant proportion went on to identify specific examples e.g. The Bedouin or Tuareg peoples. A significant number of candidates confined themselves to a description of how people use deserts rather than 'the impacts'. Many also focussed on negative generalisations about 'the impacts' e.g. 'pollution', 'global warming'. Candidates who achieved level 3 had good place specific knowledge and had clearly learnt their case studies well.

Question 2

2 a) Most candidates addressed both aspects of accessibility and altitude. Candidates frequently began with explanations of how the altitude would create breathing difficulties and then moved on to explain difficulties of access. The most common location named was the Andes though few candidates could develop further place specific detail. Generally a good understanding was displayed of the challenges related to altitude and accessibility, with good answers being well developed (e.g. lack of oxygen to breathe, cold and hypothermia, steep and rocky terrain, crevasses and injury, difficulty in obtaining help due to inaccessibility) however most candidates did not access level 3 due to lack of place specific detail and/or reference to Figure 2.

b) Most candidates could identify that fold mountains were associated with tectonic activity but then proceeded to confuse their formation with subduction and the formation of volcanoes. Most able candidates included descriptions regarding the formation of sedimentary rocks and synclines and anticlines. Some candidates incorrectly provided details about how a glacier would contribute to the formation of fold mountains. Few candidates made good use of the space to draw a diagram – often the text was of better quality than the diagram; diagrams would usually indicate movement of plates but would add little more to the answer. Candidates tended to gain marks from ideas of converging plates, pressure building and folding/crumpling of the plates.

c) Well answered, often using more than enough extracts/ quotes from the source to support their answer.

d) Well answered. The majority of candidates could name an example (the Andes were commonly used) to explore the issues of how mountains were valued. Responses with little development of place specific detail limited access to level 3. Machu Pichu was very popular but a common error was to give detail about it as an historical site and how much tourists enjoyed visiting and experiencing the Inca culture, etc. but without saying enough about its value to people, especially local people. Responses focussed mainly on the value of sites relating to hydro electric power, tourist income and agricultural opportunities.

Weaker candidates tended to focus on the value of mountains for film and documentary makers.

Question 3

a) Well answered by the majority of candidates, weaker candidates wrote about multi national companies being 'all over the world.'

b) Global distribution was well answered by many candidates however a significant number only gained one mark by essentially listing the number of McDonalds in a location without the sense of a global pattern. Weaker candidates did not understand the term 'distribution'.

c) Candidates tended to describe but not explain. Most candidates wrote about the global production of mobile phones. Many candidates achieved 3 marks as they correctly identified that coltan is mined in the DRC and that phones are assembled in China. Where candidates named a primary product such as bananas or natural gas the quality of the response, on the whole, was weaker. They found it more difficult to explain the reasons for the location. Some candidates failed to read that this question was about 'production' and therefore wrote about the location of headquarters or retail of the product.

Some candidates misunderstood the question and explained where in the world people use mobile phones and the differences in access to technology between LEDCs and MEDCs.

d) Candidates could identify working conditions in two or more locations, mostly centred on production conditions in LEDCs. More able candidates drew comparisons with MEDC conditions in the tertiary or quaternary sectors and provided statistical evidence on minimum wages, paid holidays and maternity leave to develop their answers. Many candidates did not write an evaluative statement in relation to ‘the extent to which’ aspect of the question. Comparisons were implied by many candidates rather than explicit.

e) Virtually all candidates were able to define the term ‘ethical consumerism’ and most used the example of ‘Fairtrade’ in their explanation. There was little further development of ethical consumerism by most candidates; though some candidates did write about food miles and vegetarianism.

Question 4

a i) The correct pattern was identified by most candidates with many using supportive data from Fig 5a.

a ii) Many candidates were able to identify that energy use in China was linked to the manufacture and transportation of products to USA. Where candidates described the release of emissions from factories and/ or transport, answers tended to include generic ‘pollution’ statements.

b) The most common answers were about fracking or wind farms. Answers tended to focus on creation of jobs (opportunities) and ensuing types of pollution (problems). There was a definite lack of specific detail – particularly in relation to fracking which was a very popular issue chosen. Most candidates wrote without development, just simple statements such as ‘gives people jobs’, ‘people pay less for energy’ and ‘contaminates water’. Some candidates wrote about the development of nuclear energy at ‘Hinckley C’ most of these responses contained developed statements regarding the opportunities and potential environmental problems.

c) Most candidates didn’t know or understand the idea of ‘management’ and were unable to assess it. Centres must consider this aspect of the specification. Where candidates had chosen Hinkley C for b) which led to a better response there, they failed to recognise who might be responsible for the management of the site locally and did not understand how the government might influence the management of nuclear energy production nationally. Responses rarely exceeded being awarded at level 1. More able candidates linked their ‘national management’ to Agenda 21.

Question 5

a) Most candidates stated 'rural' (correct) but then stated 'increases' (incorrect). One mark was most commonly awarded.

b i) Well answered by many candidates but a significant proportion of candidates could not define accurately; just saying it is a "large city" or has "lots of services" or something similar.

b ii) Many candidates described the change in number of megacities rather than the distribution. Candidates did not appear to read/ understand the term 'distribution'; where the distribution was described, both marks were usually awarded.

b iii) Generally rather vague responses from most candidates. The most common answers focused on generic population increase and reduction in death rates. Successful candidates recognised the significance of rural-urban migration and the reasons for it.

c) Many candidates did not appear to understand what they were being asked to do and consequently did not provide details about the land use or provided comparisons to Shanghai. Statements tended to be very vague such as 'Corby is just like Shanghai' or 'Swindon has a lot of similarities to Shanghai' – but then candidates did not clarify or exemplify why that might be the case. Candidates tended to be either generic in their descriptions or write comprehensively about their location without drawing comparisons with Shanghai.

Green space and roads/transport were successful themes for candidates to name and write about. Those that did were awarded at level 3. Many candidates struggled with place specific examples of old streets and named buildings.

Question 6

a i) Candidates commonly wrote about birth and death rates which was not creditable. Many candidates correctly identified a reduction in the number of young people and an increase in the elderly. They quoted age brackets and figures, which was not required. A significant number of candidates provided much more information than was required.

a ii) Candidates were able to state the reasons behind the changing population structure but few were able to develop their reasoning. Most common reasons stated were 'one child policy' and 'improved healthcare'. Most answers achieved two marks.

b i) Generally poorly answered. Many candidates continued with the 'China' theme and wrote about the 'one child policy'. Responses were vague and often did not develop a link to 'quality of life'. Some candidates wrote about UK population issues, most commonly immigration or ageing population and were better able to link to the idea of 'quality of life'. A significant number of candidates successfully wrote about Uganda population changes and the impact on 'quality of life'.

(ii) Generally poorly answered. Many candidates reiterated the China 'one child policy' and appeared to be unaware of more recent modifications to the government's approach on population increase. Basic impacts of the policy were correctly identified but there was little depth and development. Some candidates wrote successfully about UK immigration policies regarding both EU and non-EU immigrants but responses were largely describing the policies without attempting to evaluate the impact. A significant number of candidates did not focus on government policies but more just described population problems (particularly about migrants or the elderly).

A732/01 Geographical skills (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The first skills paper for this specification was well received. The specification states that the purpose of this paper is to assess geographical skills and the application of knowledge and understanding, using the resource materials provided. Thus all answers should be derived from those materials and candidates are not expected to introduce other knowledge, for which credit cannot be awarded.

The map extract and insert provided interest and a good challenge for candidates. Whilst limitations in literacy skills caused problems for a significant minority of candidates it was felt that the examination was wholly appropriate to foundation level and there was a broad range of performance. Most candidates appeared to make a good effort, answering all sections, even if their ultimate achievement may not have been of the highest calibre. Only a few candidates made little effort, leaving most of their papers blank, and similarly the number of candidates who showed sufficient ability to have clearly merited being entered for the higher tier was also relatively few, suggesting that centres have their entry policy broadly correct.

Most candidates attempted all questions and, in general, showed competence in handling the basic map work skills. Difficulties experienced with some of these skills, and errors made, are identified in the comments on individual questions which follow. There is a clear need to build these skills into schemes of work and constantly to revisit them, using Ordnance Survey maps whenever possible, in order to increase familiarity and ensure candidates perform at an optimum level so they do not lose marks unnecessarily. This is especially important with foundation candidates.

It was encouraging to see many candidates attempting to develop their answers in those questions which offered an opportunity to do so, though some others were far too brief and simplistic in their responses. It is vital that they try to extend answers, where appropriate using map evidence and geographical terminology, being guided by the space available and the mark allocations. There is certainly time for them to do this, as barely any candidates appeared to struggle for time to complete the paper. Clearly some candidates under achieve as they do not spend enough time, care and thought on reading, studying the resources and answering questions throughout the paper, thus losing marks unnecessarily through careless errors and inaccuracy, which is simply the result of rushing.

Key Points:

- practise the different skills involved, for example the Ordnance Survey map skills listed in the specification, along with other skills involving the use of a variety of geographical resources.
- where the completion of graphs and maps is required do this with care to achieve a high degree of accuracy.
- read the questions carefully and, if it helps, use a highlighter to make key words and exact instructions stand out.
- practise answering questions from past papers to illustrate the importance of reading questions carefully, to ensure that answers are relevant. Teachers should share mark scheme principles with students and spend some time teaching exam technique, ensuring that candidates are familiar with the meaning of common command words.

The detailed comments on questions which follow highlight the strengths and weaknesses of candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

(a) (i) Whilst many candidates correctly identified grid square B a significant number did not attempt the question or wrongly chose C or D as their answer.

(ii) and (iii) Whilst some candidates found it a challenging skill to relate the grid to the Ordnance Survey map extract many correctly identified one or both villages and the suburb. Incorrect answers were varied, including 'cemy', which was fairly common from weak candidates who clearly were unable to distinguish village names from other labelled features.

(b) (i) Candidates who were confident in using the linear scale were able to select the correct answer, 2 kilometres, though all the incorrect options were chosen by a large number of candidates who clearly found it difficult to handle this basic skill.

(ii) Generally this was well answered, with many candidates choosing at least two correct options from those provided. Some wrote different names from the ones offered to them suggesting that they had not read the question carefully enough.

(c) (i) In general this question was answered well and most candidates were able to identify two appropriate services. Some however just listed examples from the key (eg 'bus/coach station') whether or not they were in the area shown by the map. Also some candidates wrote the names of two examples of the same service (eg schools) rather than identifying different types of service.

(ii) Many candidates struggled with this question, many focussing for example on the type of housing or writing about how to get from L8 to L5. Clearly many candidates did not know how to describe a 'street pattern', though describing a pattern from a map is something with which all should be familiar.

Question 2

(a) (i) Most candidates achieved full marks for this question when it was attempted, though some were not sufficiently accurate in plotting the points or joining them up. Some candidates did not attempt this question; presumably they did not read the task below the graph.

(ii) This was well answered and most candidates identified the correct trends from the graph.

(b) (i) Well answered by most candidates, although a few listed all the languages from the extract.

(ii) Most candidates got the mark for this question although some did focus on benefits for migrants rather than for Leicester. The answer needed to be derived from the extract, such as the fact that the migrants will provide a workforce or introduce diverse cultures and varied restaurants for example.

(iii) Most candidates focused on competition for jobs or housing, which were acceptable as clearly they were based on an understanding of the content of the resource.

(iv) This was a very good question for differentiating between candidates. The majority of candidates received a level 1 or lower level 2 for this question due to their use of simple statements only (level 1) or beginning to explain their ideas (lower level 2). Such candidates tended to include little reference to the resources to back up their statements. The candidates who produced detailed answers to this question referring to jobs, services and housing, along with specific information from the resources, achieved level 3.

Question 3

(a) (i) Good comparisons here included reference to high/low order, comparison/convenience shops or specified types of shops (eg jeweller and dry cleaners). The skill required was that of using the photographs and comparing. Many candidates who did not score did not compare and/or gave answers which were derived from knowledge rather than looking closely at the photographs.

(ii) This was generally well answered, with most candidates comparing and recognising that buildings in the CBD were higher or had more storeys. There were some random answers suggesting that some candidates struggled with the term 'height' and some focussed just on one area rather than using a comparative word.

(iii) In general, this question was answered well, although again some candidates failed to compare the two areas.

(b) (i) and (ii) Whilst many candidates scored the mark here for these simple graph completion tasks, too many did not attempt the questions or did not draw the bars or segments accurately enough to achieve the marks. On a skills paper such as this candidates need to be accurate, measuring carefully and using a ruler and/or protractor as appropriate.

(iii) This was well answered and many candidates interpreted the data provided accurately and achieved full marks. A small number of candidates had obviously not read the question properly and ticked more or less than four options.

Question 4

(a) This question differentiated well with high scoring candidates using distance and/or direction from named features whilst weaker candidates simply listed features 'near' or 'close' and making sweeping and inaccurate generalisations rather than describing with precision. 'Near the motorway' for example could be anywhere on the map extract, '1 kilometre East of Junction 31 of the M1' describes it precisely (and would have scored two marks). To describe a location accurately by using distances and directions from named features is a simple skill, however it needs practice.

(b) This question was answered very well by many candidates who clearly used the resources well when writing their answers, identifying many valid reasons why Fosse Park attracts customers. Weaker answers, however just listed names of shops or services.

(c) (i) Most candidates scored both marks on this question, 'increased traffic' and 'noise' being the most popular options. Where they did not it was due to focussing on only one simple idea, without developing it or offering another idea.

(ii) Most candidates achieved one mark for this question. They correctly focussed on the fact that people went to Fosse Park instead or less people used the CBD but did not develop their idea.. It appeared that some weaker candidates were confused between what was happening at Fosse Park and the CBD.

(iii) Many candidates only focussed on the first part of this question explaining why some people were in favour of opening Fosse Park, but many did not attempt to suggest why some other people would have been against it.

A732/02 Geographical skills (Higher Tier)

General Comments

The first skills paper for this specification was well received. It was considered appropriate for the ability range of the candidates and achieved the desired differentiation.

The specification states that the purpose of this paper is to assess geographical skills and the application of knowledge and understanding, using the resource materials provided. Thus all answers should be derived from those materials and candidates are not expected to introduce other knowledge, for which credit cannot be awarded. Generally, most candidates showed a good grasp of the basic techniques necessary for successful interpretation and analysis of data. As expected the most perceptive and well prepared candidates performed superbly across the paper and some excellent geography was seen. Certainly many seemed to be familiar with, and able to some extent to cope with handling the wide variety of ways in which geographical data was presented to them in this exam and could handle some of the skills involved. Those candidates who were confident with Ordnance Survey map skills did particularly well in questions 1a to c and 4b. In contrast many others did not appear to be familiar with those skills and gained few, if any marks for these questions. This included many otherwise very competent candidates who performed well elsewhere on the paper. Others did not make full use of the figures in the resource booklet and answered in very general terms or used their own knowledge rather than the resources provided. Incorporating the resources more effectively would have enhanced a number of the responses to demonstrate a greater understanding. There was a lot of data to analyse in the time available and some struggled to follow accurately the written instructions given in the questions, particularly when they were faced with having to use several data sources at one time. This resulted in answers which were vague, irrelevant, incomplete or inaccurate.

As always, marks were lost through candidates not reading the questions carefully. The need to learn how to read and interpret questions correctly should be stressed to candidates.

Most candidates attempted all questions, and most appeared to be correctly entered for the Higher Tier, though a significant minority struggled throughout and provided little or no evidence that they were genuine Higher Tier candidates. Common difficulties experienced with answering the questions, and errors made, are identified in the comments on individual questions which follow. Centres clearly are covering most of the analytical skills required for an assessment of this type, though there is a clear need to build the appropriate skills systematically into schemes of work and constantly to revisit them. Ordnance Survey maps should be used whenever possible, in order to increase familiarity and ensure candidates perform at an optimum level so they do not lose marks unnecessarily.

Key Points:

- practise the different skills involved, particularly the Ordnance Survey map skills listed in the specification, using both 1:25000 and 1:50000 maps, along with other skills involving the use of a variety of geographical resources.
- read the questions carefully and, if it helps, use a highlighter to make key words and exact instructions stand out.
- practise answering questions from past papers to illustrate the importance of reading questions carefully to ensure that answers are relevant. Teachers should particularly stress the need for candidates to make full use of resource materials rather than attempting to display other knowledge, sharing the mark scheme principles with students and spending some time teaching exam technique. It is particularly important that candidates are familiar with the meaning of command words.

The detailed comments on questions which follow highlight the strengths and weaknesses of candidates.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) (i) Generally well answered though a few candidates missed the mark by not writing out the full name of the canal and some thought that it was the River Sence.
- (ii) Generally well answered although Aylestone was a common wrong answer
- (iii) Generally well answered although some wrote Glebe Farm despite the farm in the question being located directly on northing 94.
- (b) (i) A number of candidates struggled with the use of scale and some did not know how to measure along the road. For those who find the maths difficult, it is always worth showing them how to use paper and the scale line provided on the map. There were some wildly inaccurate answers in metres and some even gave the actual distance converted into centimetres.
- (ii) This question successfully tested the candidates' ability to use the key, scale and compass directions. Those familiar with those basic map reading skills scored both marks. Cosby was the most frequent correct answer but the second village produced a wide variety of wrong answers. Some had very little idea where to begin with this question and resorted to randomly picking out any settlements on the map.
- (iii) and (iv) The many candidates who answered well, found a grid square which had obvious signs of being dominantly rural or urban and gave appropriate evidence (eg farmland, large areas of densely packed housing). There were many candidates who lost both marks because they confused the two terms 'urban and rural' and so gave the correct information but in the wrong place. Others gave a 6 figure reference instead of 4 figures and others inverted the northings and eastings. Others gave poor examples of evidence. For example writing that a motorway goes through a square, or that there is a place of worship within it does not qualify it as being either rural or urban.
- (c) This question successfully differentiated between the candidates who took their time to understand what was being asked and those who simply rushed through, scanning the map for things which might be relevant and adopting a scattergun approach to answering it. It caused difficulty for many candidates who simply referred to any features without considering whether they were representative of inner cities (eg the railway station and the retail park both of which are just as likely to be found elsewhere in the city). The more perceptive answers focused on the density of the housing or the road pattern which clearly indicated terraced housing in many parts, or the multiple provision of some services such as schools and places of worship that would only be likely in an inner city area. The question clearly asked candidates to *give map evidence* which many did not do, though many did attempt explanations which were not required.

Question 2

- (a) Generally well answered. Most candidates managed to score something and many scored all three marks. The main reason candidates lost marks was that they did not respond to the command 'describe the changes in the *rate* of population growth' and simply described the changes (eg it increased) or gave statistics without description or attempted to explain the population changes. Some described 'as one' the changes over the entire time span.
- (b) (i) Whilst most candidates scored some marks here many did not score full marks as they identified reasons but did not elaborate and explain them. Many listed all the reasons given in the data sources and did not explain any of them, whilst others focussed on two reasons, and quoted evidence rather than giving an explanation.
- (ii) and (iii) Very few candidates missed the point here and wrote about the benefits to migrants and most scored something. As above more perceptive candidates responded to the command to 'explain a reason' whilst far too many did not do so. Many resorted to giving several benefits/difficulties in the hope of getting the second mark rather than answering in depth.

Question 3

- (a) Good comparisons here included reference to high/low order, comparison/convenience shops, height of the shops, whether the area was pedestrianised or not and how busy the areas were. The skills required were using the photographs and comparing. Many candidates who did not score well did not compare and/or gave answers which were derived from knowledge rather than looking carefully at the photographs.
- (b) (i) There were many good answers from candidates who had obviously done fieldwork based on this kind of study and who were therefore familiar with the way in which conclusions can be drawn from data collected. Those who did not score as well simply attempted to read data directly off the graphs without any comparison between the two areas or answered the questions without referring to the graphs at all, simply using their own knowledge.
- (ii) It was apparent from a large number of answers that many candidates had either not read or understood the two instructions given in this question to 'look again at the OS map' and to 'use evidence from the OS map'. They simply scanned over these and read only the part of the question which said 'give one reason why some retail areas in Leicester are likely to have a much larger sphere of influence than others'. They then answered the question based on their own knowledge rather than on the data provided on the map. The choice of shops available/price of goods etc were not credited as this information was based on knowledge. Many therefore lost the marks here and only the more careful and perceptive candidates realised that this challenging question was all about access.

Question 4

- (a) (i) Generally well answered. Most candidates used the data to successfully identify reasons why Fosse Park attracts many customers. However a minority attempted to answer this question from their own experience/knowledge and gave simple lists of the names of different shops.
- (ii) Large numbers of candidates successfully identified that the cause of the closure of shops was due to a decrease in customers visiting because more of them were going to Fosse Park. Some candidates extrapolated to explain the economic impact this would have and gained the second mark.
- (iii) This differentiated well. Weaker candidates thought Fosse Park was distant and inaccessible from Aylestone. Most could see that its range of shops and proximity would be welcome and that local shops would not welcome the competition but relatively few could convincingly develop those ideas for full marks. A significant minority had not read the question with sufficient care and wrote about the CBD.
- (b) This final question (extended response) produced the expected range of answers. Some candidates were barely able to understand what was required in terms of describing locations using a map. Others wrote articulate and well informed answers which demonstrated both excellent map reading skills and very good application of their knowledge and understanding. To successfully answer the question candidates needed to address both parts of it. There were many candidates who did themselves a disservice by not really addressing the 'location' aspect of this question or doing so in very vague terms. Sound descriptions of location, using distance and direction from named features, were essential as a basis for good explanations. Candidates who neglected to give precise locational details were not in a position to give good explanations, particularly as the question required reference to map evidence. Too many weak candidates described the location in non-geographical terms like near/far and above/below. Most tended to structure their answers into a discrete paragraph of description, with the majority restricting their comments to access and/or the proximity of customers, which limited the scope of answers. Many included irrelevant evidence such as the river/canal or rail lines, followed by an attempted explanation rather than integrating the two and explaining each element.

A733 Local geographical investigation

This new specification gives candidates the opportunity to focus all their controlled assessment efforts on one piece of work. The majority seemed to favour investigation 1A, looking at the suitability of shops and services in a local retail area for people with children or 2B, with its focus on a recent development.

The candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to the investigation titles and the submitted marks spanned the full mark range. Candidates have again visited some interesting fieldwork locations and used some effective fieldwork skills; in the best work seen the candidates clearly communicated their in-depth understanding and place knowledge of the locations being studied. It was very pleasing to see many centres once again contextualising the tasks so that they became more relevant to the candidates' own experiences. It is advisable for candidates to use the investigation title as a heading at the beginning of their work, and they should also be encouraged to return to the title at the end when drawing their conclusions. Many centres encouraged their candidates to formulate two or three enquiry questions or hypotheses based upon the investigation focus. This helped them maintain a clear focus on the aims of their investigations. In the best work seen candidates clearly understood the reasons for undertaking the fieldwork; they became absorbed in their work and were able to use the data collected in a selective and informed manner.

Most candidates were able to establish an effective and logical sequence of enquiry. In the best work seen this was obvious from the outset, and the work maintained a rigour and clear sense of purpose together with a clear statement of how the issue was related to geography. A few candidates unnecessarily included preparatory research notes with their submitted work. Please advise future candidates only to submit work that is directly relevant to the investigation brief. The inclusion of a methodology table or plan proved helpful to many candidates. It gave them the opportunity to clearly identify the techniques they had used, and also enabled many to justify and reflect on the relative merits of the field techniques employed. This proved helpful when writing their evaluations as they had clear evidence from which to draw when suggesting possible improvements to their work.

As would be expected, a wide range of techniques were seen by the moderating team. It was good to see some candidates carry out pilot questionnaires in order to inform their final choice of questions. To justify marks at level 3 in AO3, candidates should be reminded of the need to try and demonstrate independence and initiative both in the choice and their use of analytical techniques. Many candidates did achieve this through the careful selection of, at times, quite complex techniques such as located and proportional symbols, radar diagrams and statistical tests. While these techniques alone do not guarantee marks at level 3, they do give candidates the opportunity to showcase the well-developed geographical skills that many of them possess. Work that was overly prescriptive, with a tendency to display little originality and proving to be very formulaic to read and moderate, did not always give candidates this opportunity to express themselves and therefore limited the marks that they could be awarded.

A clear and positive development in the work seen has been with the use of photographic evidence. When included, most candidates added detailed and thoughtful analytical annotations to their photographs, which certainly helped them to talk with some authority about where they were carrying out their investigations. This is to be applauded as it allows the candidates to select and take images for a particular purpose; this again helps them to provide evidence of their independence and initiative, affording them opportunities to offer a very personal perspective about how their investigation may influence their own lives. There was also some excellent use of interviews, especially concerning disability access, often clearly aligned to secondary data related to the Disability Discrimination Act. In the best work seen candidates offered very structured investigations, with many utilising a sound research base

Written analysis proved most effective when it was included with the data presentation technique chosen. It proved more problematic for some candidates if they left their written analysis to the end. It would be helpful to guide candidates to analyse each chart or graph as they appear in their work; this has the added benefit of ensuring that all data is analysed sufficiently and also helps candidates draw together some general conclusions. Additionally, much of the weaker work seen tended to rely heavily upon secondary resources, with little personalisation of the investigation evident. While the use of such resources is useful, candidates should always be encouraged to go beyond what is written by developing or processing the information in some way.

One area that proved more challenging for many candidates was presenting a summary of their findings. While the summary may be related to the points made in the paragraph above, it is also perhaps seen as relatively unimportant by many of the candidates themselves. The specification highlights the need for candidates to offer 'substantiated conclusions that address the key questions'. The ability to critically reflect upon the whole process of their investigation – from planning, through to data collection and analysis and value of findings – is essential not only if candidates are to justify marks at level 3, but also if they are to successfully develop their ability to act and think like geographers. Also, candidates who included a clear bibliography in their investigations seemed to produce work that was concise, more relevant and more closely focussed on the investigation title.

Administratively there were few problems and the best-fit mark scheme was used effectively by most centres. Most completed the URS668 Unit Recording Grid appropriately, although the simple provision of a mark in each section is not of great assistance to the moderating team. Highlighting or ticking the statements on the grid, or providing additional teacher comments on aspects of the work, that clearly justify why marks had been awarded helps the moderator understand the context for the work. Also, there were a number of addition and transcription errors this year; please check calculations carefully and ensure that the correct information is submitted to both OCR and the moderating team. Failure to check this carefully could delay the moderating process.

The moderating team have been very complimentary about the quality of the geography seen from many of the candidates. With the excellent support of their teachers, candidates are clearly enjoying their investigations, are participating in some engaging and thought-provoking geography and have the potential to produce some effectively planned and very relevant pieces of work.

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