

# **Geography A**

Advanced GCE **A2 7832**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3832**

## **Report on the Units**

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**January 2010**

**3832/7832/MS/R/10J**

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

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# **Chief Examiner's Comments**

## **General Comments**

Only 2683 and 2684 were offered this January and both received similar small entries. Clearly most, if not all, candidates for both papers were re-taking the examination so outcomes were largely at the lower end of the spectrum although there were some outstanding sets of answers in both papers.

As A2 is assessed via options it is possible for candidates to experience a limited range of geography. The summer pattern was repeated with few centres studying applied climatology and service activities in 2683 and the geography of the EU remains unpopular in 2684. This selectivity does re-emphasise the importance of the synoptic paper which draws together the strands of the whole two year A level geographical experience.

## **Overall**

There remain some common themes throughout all the components:

- Candidates must carefully read and answer the question set rather than produce prepared answers that lack relevancy such as the responses to Q.10 in 2684;
- Candidates need to understand and use effectively geographical definitions and technical terms, especially in 2683. These were often poorly understood even by more able candidates;
- Candidates would be better advised to develop a few examples or case studies in depth rather than many superficial ones;
- Often the level of a candidate's response is held back by the poor quality of English. The use of paragraphs is still not well understood at A2;
- More candidates should emphasise the spatial context of their work and stress location. Some need to refer to far more examples or case studies. A greater use of sketch maps at A2 would be welcomed.

## **2683 Options in Physical and Human Geography**

### **General comments**

The very small numbers of scripts marked during this session mean that comments can only be made on the limited range of questions attempted. Questions not referred to below were either not answered by any candidates or by just one or two.

There was a wide range in script quality from some outstanding responses down to those whose answers were really rather basic.

As has been the case during the lifetime of this Specification, Coastal Environments was the most answered Physical Geography option. The two questions set in this Option were equally popular.

### **Question 1**

- (a) focused on the role of lithology and structure on coastal plan form. At the top end, candidates latched onto plan and offered convincing descriptions of concordant and discordant coastlines with good use made of the Dorset coast by way of exemplification. Weaker responses did not understand 'plan' and gave descriptions of cliff profiles.
- (b) asked candidates to consider the role of sea level change on the development of coastal landforms. Most answers offered sound or better discussions with both rising and falling relative rises considered by the majority. As anticipated, only the very best responses made reference to the importance of 'relative' change.

### **Question 2**

- (a) was set in the context of sediment transportation and deposition in the coastal zone. Many answers contained effective descriptions of contrasts amongst a range in calibre of sediment, relating this to contrasts in energy required to entrain and transport. Some responses ignored deposition altogether, while others dealt with this process to good effect.

### **Question 3**

- (a) took long profile changes in a river's width, depth and gradient as its focus. Responses were rather disappointing, as most offered simplistic descriptions which were correct but did not recognise some of the subtleties observed on most rivers. For example, that width generally increases more rapidly than depth.
- (b) moved onto considering a river's load, asking candidates to explain variations in the load carried by a river. There were some effective answers based on variations in energy and contrasts downstream, but it was disappointing how few mentioned the term 'competence' and even fewer really understood it.

**Question 4**

- (a) asked for descriptions of variations in water flow in channels of different cross-section and plan. Candidates were secure in their knowledge and understanding of the three basic types of flow.
- (b) had the topic of river flooding as its focus. Here the key to a successful response was to pick up on the word 'interaction' in the question. As ever for this topic, using the idea of the drainage basin as a system has considerable potential in acting as a suitable framework for this topic.

**Question 6**

- (a) led to some effective descriptions of the landforms and landscapes resulting from deposition directly by ice. Moraines of various types, drumlins and erratics commonly made up the bulk of an answer. Only a very few candidates became involved in landforms that were inappropriate, such as eskers.
- (b) asked candidates to explain the role of glacial erosion in upland landform and landscape formation and development. There were several detailed and convincing discussions of corries and troughs but few who picked up on landscapes such as the contrast between North and mid-Wales.

**Question 11**

- (a) was set in the context of the role of the physical environment on agriculture, looking at relief in particular. Factors such as altitude (related to its relationship with climate) and slope angle were effectively described. Aspect was the factor most ignored.
- (b) was not well answered as candidates tended to struggle to link different types of farming and ecosystems. Those that were successful looked at the impacts of modern intensive commercial agriculture with more traditional types such as mixed farming.

**Question 17**

- (a) focused on three principal types of tourist destinations: resort, enclave and zone. There was a wide range in the effectiveness of answers as some candidates were very secure in their knowledge and made convincing use of exemplars. Others were muddled both in the theory and application in the real world.
- (b) looked at the relationship between government and tourism and recreation. There were some sound explanations as to the encouragement often offered to tourism by governments set in both LEDC and MEDC contexts. It was also encouraging to read of the use of recreation to promote better health.

**Question 18**

- (a) identified political changes and crises as being significant to international tourism. Candidates were generally secure in their descriptions but tended to focus mainly on the negative impacts such as when terrorism struck. Few candidates described the positive effects such as a change in attitude of a government towards international visitors.
- (b) asked candidates to explain the role of changes in infrastructure on patterns of international tourism. While most made some comments which were suitable, too many spent time dealing with changes affecting only domestic tourism. Railways were an appropriate infrastructural change as long as they were set in the international context, not simply in allowing large numbers of people to visit the seaside. Effective comments were made about air travel and cruise liners.

## 2684 Synoptic Geography: People and Environment Options

### General Comments

Candidates produced a wide range of performance. This examination proved quite challenging for some candidates who failed to read the question set carefully enough. The group that achieved the top grade did so by directly answering the question, using detailed examples and case studies and making obvious synoptic links. Those more marginal candidates had two or more of these essential elements missing. There were relatively few at the highest level as candidates struggled to evaluate effectively, especially in Question 10.

The questions on this unit are open-ended and evaluative so requiring careful thought and planning. Plans also help examiners trace the logic of the candidates' thinking. It was encouraging to see that most candidates did present brief plans and it was those answers that tended to have a tighter, better focused structure.

The responses are marked by component and candidates' responses varied greatly between these components:

- 1) Knowledge of content – more successful candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of case studies, relevant concepts and geographical terms. Some weaker candidates made no reference to any location apart from 'e.g. Africa' type exemplification. Candidates should appreciate that this is a geography examination so some concept of location or/and place is essential. Without this clear grounding in the real world candidates cannot expect to do well.
- 2) Critical understanding of content – this was the more effective component for the majority of candidates who demonstrated a clear appreciation of cause-effect and an understanding of the connections between different aspects of the subject (including synoptic connections). Clearly the basic concepts are well taught and understood by candidates.
- 3) Application and evaluation – this is the crucial component as it requires the higher level analytical and discursive skills to apply the understanding and knowledge to answer the question set. It is the evaluation aspect that usually distinguishes the better candidate and this examination was no exception. The higher achieving candidates evaluated arguments, concepts and statements in detail with some encouraging insights based on synoptic understanding, usually drawn from AS. Weaker candidates tended to agree with any quotation regardless of the scale, location or time period. Many candidates could still improve their responses by using a less descriptive approach in their answers.
- 4) Communication – this varied tremendously, as in most years. This is an essay paper and so requires lengthy extended discursive writing. Weaker candidates found even the most basic forms of communication difficult. Spelling continues to be of particular concern as many could not spell place names, even those in the news e.g. *Hayti*. The misspelling of basic words like 'there' (confused with their) and 'where' (were) continues to be common. Weaker candidates also struggled with the concept of the paragraph. At the other end of the scale stronger candidates wrote with a fluency and organisation that they, and their schools, should be proud to have produced in examination conditions. Candidates should be reminded that a total of 16 marks are available on this unit specifically to reward effective communication so it is important to present their work in a readable form with a clear introduction and conclusion and in a structured format. Unfortunately some candidates still provide introductions that state the obvious:

*'Using examples, I am now going to write about the difference between primary and secondary hazard impacts.'*

Such an introduction suggests a low level response to an examiner.

Candidates must appreciate that their answers should:

- **Relate directly to the question set.** Some offered pre-learnt answers e.g. on hazard preparation for Question 10 which had only passing relevance to the actual question on prediction.
- **Give examples.** Stronger candidates quoted detailed knowledge of locations and some drew relevant maps. Weaker ones gave vague references; e.g. for Question 5 many assumed their answer was obviously about the UK but never stated it.
- **Be clearly synoptic.** Most of the questions had clear possibilities for synoptic links e.g. Questions 10 and 12 could have linked into current media coverage of the Haiti disaster. The link should be seamless so the discussion flows.

Those candidates that achieved the highest grades:

- Demonstrated consistently good performance throughout the paper
- Showed detailed locational knowledge– there was a clear sense of place
- Used appropriate and accurate geographical vocabulary
- Showed they understood cause-effect relationships

**And above all:**

- Answered the question set

The selection of questions selected contained the usual unevenness with Question 10 proving very popular yet poorly done and again few candidates do the EU. A very large number of candidates, this examination, selected a rural management question – especially Question 8.

### **Comments on individual Questions:**

#### ***Option 1: Geographical Aspects of the European Union***

1. **To what extent does location in the geographical core of the EU result in economic advantage?** [60]

This question was often well answered. Most chose to compare the economic advantages of a location in the 'hot banana' with a peripheral area such as Norbottan. Better answers then looked at a location in the core that had lost its economic advantages e.g. Lille.

What was largely missed was the possibility of economic advantage outside the core although some did touch on it:

*The Costas of Spain are outside the core but the growth of tourism has given them marked economic advantages.*

What was missed was an explanatory framework such as the Core-Periphery model that would have given a tighter focus for the answers.



**2. To what extent has the Common Agricultural Policy had a greater impact on rural environments than on rural communities? [60]**

No candidates attempted this question.

**3. For either a former mining area or a declining manufacturing region in the EU evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used to regenerate the area. [60]**

This was not a popular question and answers often focused on the Ruhr so combining both of the two types of regions. A wide range of strategies was examined both at a regional level – EU support, and at the local – local government strategies.

The limiting factor tended to be the evaluation of their relative success at regenerating the area. As so often happened in this paper such evaluations were not really explained:

*This strategy has worked and the environment of the Ruhr valley has been transformed with increases in leisure and recreational activities.*

But why did it work?

**Option 2: Managing Urban Environments**

**4. 'The rapid growth of large cities in LEDCs causes more harm than good.' Discuss the validity of this statement? [60]**

This was a very popular question. Most agreed with the statement and offered long descriptive paragraphs on pollution, poverty, poor housing etc. Few examined the positives and these were rarely evaluated effectively. Often the examples lacked the expected detail or detail was not well focused and seemed to have been borrowed from previous questions:

*In the shanty towns of Rio assisted Self Help Schemes (ASH) have been used to improve shanty towns. The government encourages the people in the shanty town to help themselves so creating a good community spirit.*

Few looked at the macro picture or saw the advantages of concentrating resources and investment to create the multiplier effect to aid 'take-off'.

This is a common theme this examination. Too much description and insufficient analytical evaluation.

**5. To what extent has the control of urban sprawl in MEDCs been successful? [60]**

This was a very popular question but was rarely done effectively. Many candidates spent considerable space and time explaining why urban sprawl occurred rather than focusing on management strategies that attempt to control it. Once over that, often excessive, introduction answers picked out some valid points such as greenbelts, New Towns, brownfield development etc. Unfortunately these were often poorly evaluated and poorly exemplified:

*London has a greenbelt that was designed to stop sprawl as it could not be built on.*

Many wandered off onto controlling traffic congestion and pollution or looking at wider aspects of urban renewal without linking it back into how it controlled urban sprawl:

*Regeneration of inner urban areas helps reduce sprawl. Brownfield sites are redeveloped to house population e.g. Manchester.*

Many kept to greenbelt policy and little else. Few really exemplified the various levels of success of such schemes.

The chronology of many of these strategies was not well known with some candidates viewing urban sprawl as the product of the 1990s and greenbelts as the product of the current government.

**6. 'Despite government policies, spatial inequalities within urban areas remain as wide as ever.' How far do you agree with this statement? [60]**

No candidates attempted this question.

**Option 3: Managing Rural Environments**

**7. 'The management of remote rural areas presents a greater challenge than managing less remote rural areas.' How far do you agree with this statement? [60]**

Few chose this question and those that did rather missed the focus of relative ease of management. Less remote areas were seen as urban fringe or even green belt hence were tightly planned and managed. Few really explained why they are easier to manage, often not quite focusing on the question:

*Being nearer the city there is great pressure on these areas so to reduce the threats to the rural environment they are closely managed.*

It is less about the threats and more about the ease such as lower transport costs, larger rural population, less extreme physical geography. Few disagreed but there is a strong case to suggest it is easier as fewer interest groups and conflicts in remoter areas. Even land ownership is often simpler:

*Much of the remote area of Dartmoor is owned by the army which makes it much easier to manage.*

But why?

**8. 'The growth of second home ownership is a major threat to rural communities.'  
Consider the validity of this statement. [60]**

This was a very popular question and was generally successfully answered. Again many answers were cut short by the seeming need to give long introductions on why second home ownership has increased so much in recent years.

Again candidates tended to agree with the statement with few identifying any benefits from owning second homes. Some more effective answers did qualify the 'gloom and doom' approach:

*Often in remote declining rural areas second homes are the only thing keeping the village alive – if only in the summer months and at weekends.*

The level of exemplification varied greatly. Some gave lots of facts and figures about real communities whilst others were generic or simplistic.

*In the Cotswolds many villages have 30% second homes which leads to shops closing and services e.g. buses being reduced.*

**9. To what extent should the rural environment be allowed to change in national parks and other protected landscapes? [60]**

This was a poorly answered question as so many candidates saw this as an excuse to talk about national parks and AONBs etc rather than focus on the issue of change – the conserve v preserve argument. Few actually answered the question of 'to what extent'.

Most concentrated on the threats to such areas which naturally had to be protected from them:

*Much of the Peak District National Park is under threat from limestone quarrying and so the Park Authority has banned this except at the edge where it does less scenic damage.*

The idea that National Parks must be vibrant living communities was largely ignored so few saw that some change was vital to keep communities viable. One of the major functions of national parks is little understood. Pity more answers didn't explore the scale issue – It is easier to control change within a small localised SSSI – or look at different forms of change. Change is inevitable but needs to be managed in such areas to benefit a whole range of stakeholders.

**Option 4: Hazardous Environments**

**10. To what extent are the impacts of natural hazards influenced by human rather than physical factors? [60]**

This was the most popular question yet few seemed capable at considering the role of physical factors. Most ignored these or dismissed them:

*Physical factors e.g. plate movement create the initial hazard but it is the human factors that turn it into a disaster.*

So most answers were too descriptive and focused on how a range of human factors, typically MEDC v LEDC, modified the impact of a range of hazards. Typically the impact of the Boxing Day tsunamis was seen as resulting from the lack of warning due to lack of warning technology rather than the low lying nature of the coast unprotected by mangrove swamps. Indeed it was as if physical factors were not known.

**11 'The impact of hurricanes and tropical storms reflects an area's level of development more than the severity of the event.' Evaluate this viewpoint. [60]**

This was often done well with candidates comparing two hurricanes of the same violence one of which hit a LEDC and one a MEDC. Often Bangladesh was contrasted with the impacts of Hurricanes on Florida. Many did link contrasting impacts to levels of development:

*The impact in Florida was less in terms of loss of life as buildings were sturdier but greater in economic terms as being a developed country there were expensive infrastructure, offices and possessions that were destroyed.*

Some then did go on to disagree by looking at Hurricane Katrina as an example of a highly developed area suffering more. Many blamed this on the political indifference rather than the sheer scale of the storm or the physical geography of the area.

Again it was the level of explanation that let candidates down. It is also important to give dates for such events as some areas get frequent storms.

**12 'It is the resultant hazards rather than earthquake event that cause the greatest losses'. To what extent do you agree with this statement? [60]**

This was surprisingly poorly done which was disappointing considering the very recent Haiti earthquake. The chief problem was the inability to agree what constituted resultant hazards. There is some debate but the event itself would destroy buildings, roads whilst subsequent hazards would be considered secondary such as landslides, fires, tsunamis. Most knew these but then rather confused things by not accurately allocating the damage:

*Earthquakes break gas and electricity cables so fire is a major killer as in the case of the Kobe earthquake in Japan.*

This is so typical – so is it the event or not? Also candidates really do need to locate disasters in time as well as place.

To some extent it was less about the nature of the event and resultant hazards and more about why one might cause 'the greatest losses'. Candidates seemed to ignore this evaluation preferring to describe a range of natural disasters.

Candidates should always look at evaluation from a range of viewpoints. Some suggested:

*Resultant hazards e.g. loss of homes are often greater and longer lasting in LEDCs as they lack the resources to recover quickly.*

# Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Geography A 3832 7832  
January 2010 Examination Series

## Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2683	Raw	90	66	59	52	45	39	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2684	Raw	120	83	75	67	60	53	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

## Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3832	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7832	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3832	0	0	20.0	40.0	80.0	100.0	6
7832	18.6	49.2	74.6	96.6	100.0	100.0	61

## 67 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

[http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums\\_results.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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