GEOGRAPHY

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 26	27 - 40	41 -52	53 - 63	64 - 74	75 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 25	26 - 38	39 - 49	50 - 61	62 - 72	73 - 100

Higher and standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 30

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

As always, the work submitted for moderation covered a wide range of topics, including many old favourites. The most common topics selected for fieldwork were related to rivers, coasts and urban areas, but fieldwork was seen on almost every topic in the syllabus. It should be said, however, that fieldwork based on topics in paper one and higher level paper three often did not reach such high standards as most of the work related to paper two, though there were some noteworthy exceptions.

It was especially pleasing to read work on socially-responsible topics, some of which reached a very high standard. Topics in this category included a look at the distribution of "food deserts" in a large city, the relationship between income levels and educational provision in a mid-sized city, and the connections between daily income, access to safe water and incidence of diseases in an urban slum. Such topics require demanding fieldwork, often involving a degree of originality in the methods employed. The resulting first-hand accounts clearly demonstrated how the experience had opened candidates' eyes to all manner of irregularities, inequalities and injustices, some of them quite unexpected. While it is recognized that work of this nature may not be appropriate for all centres, it is encouraging to see the willingness of IB geography teachers to facilitate candidate investigations of such important contemporary issues.

In most centres, candidates worked in groups to collect suitable primary data. Most teachers offered candidates an appropriate level of guidance, by limiting their assistance to stages of report writing only up to and including the collation of data, but not beyond. One welcome development is that more centres than ever are now allowing candidates some choice in either the topic chosen and/or the hypotheses to be investigated.

Sadly, as in previous sessions, a small minority of centres submitted one or more fieldwork reports that failed to comply with IA regulations because they were entirely based on secondary information. In most cases, these non-compliant reports had been marked far too leniently by the teacher.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A – Fieldwork question and geographic context

Most work had a well-focused fieldwork question. In many cases, this was followed by appropriate hypotheses. Most candidates are now writing more tightly focused introductions in which background theory is linked to the precise geographical context where the study is being undertaken.

Almost all candidates stated the area of the syllabus that was relevant to their fieldwork question, many adding a comment or two outlining the topic's importance and its possible connections to other parts of the syllabus as well. Very few reports this session were on topics that had no relevance to the current syllabus (such reports invariably score badly).

Many of the maps used in fieldwork reports, including those used in the introduction, remained of a disappointing standard. There is very little point in including a downloaded map unless it is annotated to show the key places relevant to the study being undertaken. Adding personalized annotations to locational maps allows candidates to demonstrate additional map skills and to give some background material in an easy-to-absorb way. This can be a very effective way to help set the scene and describe the geographic context.

The judicious use of colour on maps is becoming a lost art; candidates should pay careful attention to their choice of colours, and teachers must ensure that the report

submitted for moderation is the original, coloured, candidate's work, not a black and white photocopy.

Almost all candidates are now providing the source for any non-original maps or diagrams used in reports. The source should be placed as near as possible to the diagram or map, rather than only being given in end notes. All sources should also be included in the bibliography.

A small number of centres attempted fieldwork that proved too ambitious to complete successfully. The feasibility of fieldwork projects should be carefully considered before it is undertaken. In some cases, a pilot study may be needed to help reveal unexpected challenges and allow for the fieldwork topic or techniques to be modified.

Criterion B – Method(s) of investigation

In most cases, methods were not only described but well justified. There is no justification for using a table to show methods since most of the words used in this fashion will still count towards the final word count. Almost all fieldwork did produce data of sufficient quality and quantity to allow for meaningful analysis.

Weaker reports lacked sufficient justification for the methods used. Ideally, methods should be agreed through discussion, taking into account the relevant geographic concepts. For example, in the case of river velocity, the discussion might consider whether the appropriate variable to measure is mean surface velocity or maximum sub-surface velocity.

At the other end of the spectrum, some methods were exceptionally well thought-out and, in some cases, innovative. It was great to see cases where candidates had devised their own completely original "scales" to quantify an important variable or characteristic related to their investigation.

Many reports would be improved if candidates explained precisely how the sample size was determined, as well as the selection method employed.

In cases where questionnaires were used, the methods section should incorporate some justification for the precise questions asked, together with clear reference to the number of responses, time of survey and choice of survey points.

It was interesting to see that more centres are offering candidates the comparative data collected in previous years for them to consider including in their analysis. This can be a very good idea, but material from previous years is considered secondary information and therefore should never play a very large part in the final analysis.

Criterion C – Quality and treatment of information collected

A wide range of maps, graphs, diagrams, photographs and other illustration was used. Some could have been significantly improved by relevant labels and annotations.

The best reports included some truly outstanding techniques of data treatment and display, which easily exceeded the demands of the top mark band for this criterion.

Fewer reports than previous sessions used statistical methods such as Spearman's rank correlation, Pearson's product moment correlation or Chi-squared. On the other hand, when statistics were used, they were generally used on samples that exceeded the test's minimum requirements. Most candidates did attempt to assess the significance of their results. Many reports are illustrated by outstanding graphical illustrations and statistical maps (isolines, choropleths). An increasing number of candidates placed graphs/data directly onto background maps, making it easy to visualize spatial patterns.

For this criterion, the use of colour continues to be a relative weakness. This is especially true of choropleth maps. When these show distinct classes of quantified data, it is important that the colours chosen help the viewer discern the highest class and how the classes are ordered (for example, by grading several tones of a single colour from dark (= more) to light (= less)).

It is not appropriate to use more than one method to show precisely the same data (for example, using both a pie chart and a histogram for identical data). Candidates should be encouraged to select the best method for their purpose, and briefly justify their choice.

Criterion D - Written analysis

The written analysis was the most variable section of reports. Better candidates wrote perceptive analyses, including valid explanations, and quickly reached the top mark descriptors while weaker candidates tended to resort to simplistic statements and descriptive summaries. All written analysis should be clearly linked to the data and any graphical or statistical treatment. Anomalies should be explained, not simply ignored or ascribed to some form of observer error.

Reports which investigated more than one hypothesis and then presented separate analyses for each tended to do less well on this criteria than reports which integrated the discussion of results in to a single section where the connections between hypotheses could be readily explored.

Criterion E - Conclusion

Most conclusions were generally consistent with results and analysis. Weaker candidates sometimes introduced new material into their conclusions or included information which might have been better placed in their analysis.

Criterion F - Evaluation

Most candidates were able to make some sensible evaluations of methods, with valid suggestions for improvements. Fewer candidates also considered how the original fieldwork question or hypothesis might be modified or improved. While it is not

necessary there were more recommendations for improvements to method than for extensions.

Criterion G - Formal requirements

It is disappointing that many candidates failed to gain full marks for this criterion.

Almost all reports respected the 2500-word limit, with most candidates writing their total word count on the front cover of their report. Some candidates also (helpfully) gave the number of words for each section of the report.

A small minority of candidates did not number all illustrations sequentially, or included material in the appendix that was of central importance to the report and which really belonged in the body of the report. It is important that all material pertaining to criteria C and D be interwoven into a single section of the report.

Appendices were usually used appropriately, i.e. only for material that was non-essential such as an example of a completed questionnaire. Centres are reminded that moderators are NOT required to read the appendix, so any diagrams or maps essential to the study MUST be included in the body of the report.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The fieldwork reports submitted should be the originals, so that the moderator assesses any coloured diagrams, maps and photos as the candidate intended. The judicious use of colour can considerably enhance the clarity of the geography in fieldwork reports.

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- Ensure they have a tightly focused fieldwork question and, if relevant, a strictly limited number (no more than two or three) hypotheses. Where hypotheses are used, there is no requirement that more than one hypothesis be investigated.
- Avoid “futuristic” questions, and ensure that any hypotheses are scientifically-testable statements.
- Use an annotated sketch-map to show the location, choice of topic and/or sample points. Maps from Google Earth or similar sources must be given added value by the addition of individual, carefully chosen, annotations.
- Avoid using extensive tables in reports; almost all the words in tables do count towards the total word count.
- Seek to incorporate a variety of relevant graphical techniques; reports using only one or two kinds of diagrams rarely score well.
- Avoid simplistic, descriptive analysis and focus on trying to interpret and explain their results, especially any spatial patterns or trends identified, referring regularly to the original fieldwork question and any hypotheses.

Teachers should be encouraged to:

- Help candidates choose an appropriate fieldwork question, and any related hypothesis or hypotheses. The basis of good fieldwork is choosing an appropriate, well-focused fieldwork question, and putting it in context by providing relevant details of such elements as climate, soils, relief and communications (these depend on the precise fieldwork question chosen).
- Ensure that the fieldwork study involves the collection of sufficient quantitative data.
- Provide candidates a check list with details of the assessment criteria.
- Add comments to all reports (either on the report or as a separate matrix or mark sheet) explaining why particular marks have been awarded.

Final comments

There is no doubt about the value of good geographical fieldwork and the current syllabus and assessment criteria appear to be working well in this regard.

The general standard of work seen at moderation was encouraging. There is plenty of evidence that most candidates are acquiring a sound knowledge and a good understanding of their fieldwork investigations. The best projects recognized trends and spatial patterns that were both relevant and interesting.

Teachers are encouraged to keep going with helping candidates undertake such valuable work and to further develop their candidates' skills in researching, processing and interpreting empirical data.

Higher and standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 8	9 - 17	18 - 24	25 - 30	31 - 37	38 - 43	44 - 60

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 8	9 - 17	18 - 24	25 - 30	31 - 37	38 - 43	44 - 60

The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates

In some answers the candidates used historical case studies, which were of marginal relevance. Some candidates still confused explanation with description and wrote long detailed accounts with reasons and causes when only simple identification of patterns or trends was required. Some were not well versed in the definitions that are provided in the geography guide. Specific subject areas that candidates seemed to struggle with were: youthful population structure; an inequality linked to ethnicity; explaining the greenhouse effect; and providing a focused, well-structured and exemplified answer in the extended response question. Unlike last year there were no areas of the programme where there were universal weaknesses. In section B most chose question five, not because they were better prepared for it, just that they were used to it as a topic. Candidates who chose the other questions did equally as well on average.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Most candidates seemed familiar with the command terms and hence gave appropriate answers. Good candidates were able to produce very reasonable answers to the section B extended written response, and examiners reported that it was great to see so many candidates writing a detailed essay plan. There were no obvious areas of the programme in which candidates had been more or less prepared. There was an impressive choice and breadth of case study materials across responses. On the whole, candidates were well versed in identifying spatial patterns and correlation; however, a number still fail to quantify their description.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) Most candidates could identify the trend in the graph and described the relationship with quantification and reference to anomalies. Fewer candidates mentioned the non-linear pattern and age ceiling of 80 years. In some cases quantification was non-existent or incomplete.

(b) Some candidates attempted to explain the relationship without seeing longevity as the dependent variable; thus answers suggested that as longevity increased, GDP increased. In some cases candidates simply mirrored their answers to the two sub parts, for example, high GDP equals good sanitation, and low GDP equals bad sanitation.

(c) It was clear that many candidates did not understand the term “youthful population structure”. Many assumed this meant a large working population. This resulted in

answers being incorrect unless this was seen as a potential/future economic effect. Very few responses used appropriate terminology such as dependency ratio.

Question 2

(a) No real problems here with most candidates scoring full marks. A few responses did lack quantification or had issues with compass directions.

(b) This was well answered, with most candidates providing detailed strengths and weaknesses of the HDI.

(c) This question proved challenging to some candidates as they were unable to offer a valid, contemporary example. Some candidates wrote about gender despite this not being the question. The majority could draw attention to the inequalities resulting from ethnicity in a named country but explanations were not always succinct. Some answers were of a historical perspective. The best responses tended to be about Aboriginals in Australia or about the continued consequences of apartheid for South Africa.

Question 3

(a) Most candidates had the correct answer (India) here, but a surprising number wrote Japan.

(b) Many candidates did not refer to emissions per person and this limited the marks that could be awarded. Car usage seemed to dominate answers and few went as far as considering the impact of regulation and clean fuel initiatives.

(c) On the whole the process of the enhanced greenhouse effect was explained well, but a considerable number of candidates were unable to differentiate between ozone depletion and the enhanced greenhouse effect and so offered muddled answers. It was very encouraging to see a number of candidates answer this question with an annotated diagram.

Question 4

(a) This was a straightforward question; the definition of “ecological footprint” is in the guide. Unfortunately a wide array of definitions was given in responses often showing a limited understanding of what the term actually means.

(b) Generally answered very well. Some failed to get full marks as there was no quantification.

(c) A weak area again, very few candidates scoring full marks. There were a lot of inappropriate guesses going on or often this question was left blank. It showed that many candidates have a limited understanding of the workings of the ecological footprint.

(d) A significant number of candidates discussed Malthus prior to explaining the anti-Malthusian view. This impacted on time for some. Many lacked information on arguments against Malthus. Some responses showed very sound knowledge and understanding of anti-Malthusian ideas, backed up with excellent examples/detail.

Section B

Question 5

This was the most preferred question. The strongest responses had well balanced answers from both the origin and destination points of view as well as both positive and negative discussions. Weaker candidates failed to illustrate their work with specific and detailed case studies and were unsuccessful in their attempt to consider in any detail the meaning of disparities in wealth and development. Some decided to ignore the question and just wrote on the advantages and disadvantages of migration; this was self limiting.

Question 6

Many candidates did not show an understanding of environmental sustainability and as such their answers lacked the correct focus. The best answers had detailed accounts of the relationship and included plenty of valid and accurate case studies. There was some detailed knowledge and understanding of how some countries are developing alternative energies and thus improving their sustainability.

Question 7

The best answers had rigorous knowledge and understanding of water scarcity, both economic and physical and could relate this to population change (although often only growth). Only the best candidates disagreed with the statement explaining that population growth is just one of a complex number of factors that impact on water scarcity. Some of these responses were excellent, looking at political and economic factors such as privatization of water and increased affluence. Case studies tended to be generalized but there were some instances of precise examples, particularly from Australia.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates must read the questions with care and identify key command terms such as describe, explain, examine, discuss. Too many candidates are giving explanations when simple description is all that is required.

- If the question requires at some point the *stating of the relationship* candidates should make sure this is done very clearly.
- Candidates need to be advised on how to use the quantitative data in the graphs and maps in their answers.
- Teachers should also stress the importance of reading and re-reading the questions so that they are not misinterpreted.
- Essay plans are being used and this habit should be encouraged.
- Candidates should be taught up-to-date case studies rather than relying on outdated examples from way before their own lifetime.
- Candidates should also be made aware that the definitions provided in the syllabus are crucial to assisting them in their examinations.
- Candidates need to plan their use of time with care as often the extended response was rushed.
- The topic of ethnicity needs to be treated with greater depth to ensure that candidates are prepared to answer a wide range of questions on this subject.

Higher and standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 14	15 - 22	23 - 29	30 - 35	36 - 42	43 – 60

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 23	24 - 27	28 -40

The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates

In general, centres appear to be becoming more comfortable teaching the new syllabus and most candidates are being well prepared for the examination.

Fewer scripts this session had rubric infringements, though some weaker candidates attempted more than the required (two or) three questions, sometimes across a range of themes.

At both higher and standard level, map work skills (question 2) and knowledge/understanding of physical geography landforms and processes (questions 3, 5 and 6) remain relatively weak. Very few candidates had a good understanding of drought impact reduction (question 7) or energy efficiency ratios in agriculture (question 12).

Teachers are reminded that the term “recent” is used in some geography questions (for example, question 12) deliberately to try to prevent candidates from engaging in historical accounts, few of which ever gain satisfactory marks.

Weaker candidates failed to “unpack” terms such as “human activity” (questions 1 and 5) and “freshwater resources” (question 2) into their constituent parts (i.e. into different specific activities or resources.)

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

The best responses were enhanced by well chosen, contemporary and detailed examples. Answers incorporated many different relevant and detailed case studies. The judicious use of well-chosen case studies allowed some candidates to display truly outstanding levels of knowledge and understanding.

The level of candidate performance for each optional theme did not appear to vary significantly from one theme to another. There were some high-scoring responses to almost every question on the paper.

The interpretation of command terms has improved significantly in the past few sessions, but is still far from perfect.

Many candidates are being well trained in the skills of interpreting graphical information, and more candidates now routinely include clear reference to the graphs or diagrams and include some quantification in their responses.

More candidates are realizing that challenging any statement they are asked to discuss enables them to offer alternative viewpoints, resulting in stronger responses.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

The most popular questions were from optional themes D (Hazards and disasters), E (Leisure, sport and tourism) and G (Urban environments), followed by F (The geography of food and health). This was true for both higher and standard level.

Optional theme A: Freshwater – issues and conflicts

Question 1

Knowledge and understanding was good for 1(a) and 1(b), although, as noted above, weaker candidates often failed to unpack the term “human activity”. Popular choices were urbanization, deforestation and river channel modifications.

Many answers to (c) were based on the USA–Mexico conflict over usage of the River Colorado, but specific details of this (or other chosen examples such as the Nile basin or the Jordan) were often shaky. Some accounts were overly descriptive and

insufficiently focused on the details of the conflict. Where candidates wrote about more than one example, the higher-scoring example was credited.

Question 2

Descriptions of the "geographical characteristics" in 2(a) were poor and often failed to include direction of flow or to identify specific landforms that were clearly visible on the map. Many attempts at (b) failed to distinguish between the different freshwater resources shown on the relevant area of the map. Some ideas (such as building a hydro-electric power station) revealed a complete lack of appreciation for scale or reality. There were some strong, well-balanced responses to (c); weaker responses tended to be purely descriptive of past flood events or flood protection strategies.

Optional theme B: Oceans and their coastal margins

Question 3

Knowledge and understanding for 3(a) was limited, with the term "pattern of ocean currents" ignored by some candidates. The importance of the oceanic conveyor belt in (b) was handled much better by candidates than was its functioning. Some candidates did not have any clear idea of what the oceanic conveyor belt is. Descriptive case studies tended to overwhelm genuine discussion in (c), with surprisingly few candidates offering evidenced accounts of sustainable fishing methods.

Question 4

For question 4 few candidates had difficulty with parts (a) and (b), although in (b) it was not always easy for examiners to decide exactly where one consequence ended and the next began. Responses to (c) tended to spend far too long describing causes (not required by the question) and too little time on effects and their consequences. Relatively few responses acknowledged any possible positive effects.

Optional theme C: Extreme environments

Question 5

The command term in 5(a) was "describe", not "explain". Many candidates identified landforms correctly, but failed to describe them. There were some very strong answers to (b), and some sound discussions in (c). Weaker responses to (c) tended to be descriptive, did not show a good understanding of sustainability and failed to look at specific human activities.

Question 6

Knowledge and understanding in 6(a) was not strong, with many responses venturing far away from climate into vegetation and relief. With some notable exceptions, better knowledge and understanding was evident in (b). Accounts of agriculture in (c) were

disappointingly weak, with few candidates showing the required depth of knowledge and understanding.

Optional theme D: Hazards and disasters – risk assessment and response

Question 7

The weakest area was 7(b) where some of the suggestions were long-term options that were not well related to reducing drought impact. In 7(c) responses tended to try to force rehearsed case studies into the question, irrespective of their real relevance. Some candidates discussed more than one type of hazard, in which case the strongest type was credited, and the others ignored. In almost all cases, hazard prediction was less well understood than hazard preparedness.

Question 8

In question 8, some candidates did not do well on part (a), but most had relevant suggestions for (b). Weaker candidates, apparently unfamiliar with the word "perceive" wrote only about why people continue to live in hazardous areas. One of the most common choices of human-induced (technological) hazard event for (c) was the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station disaster (2011), though this was an inappropriate choice, given that it was caused by an earthquake and resulting tsunami. Some credit was given in cases where candidates argued that human responses to the events had exacerbated the disaster. Wiser choices of example were the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (2010) or the Prestige oil spill in Spain (2002). Credit was given for the much older (and therefore not strictly "recent") Chernobyl disaster (1986) and the Union Carbide Bhopal toxic leak (1984).

Optional theme E: Leisure, sport and tourism

Question 9

Candidates had little difficulty with 9(a). Some candidates wandered away from the Three Peaks recreation area in (b) and relatively few responses showed a clear understanding of "carrying capacity" even in cases where mostly accurate comments had been made about the two activities chosen. Answers to (c) were very disappointing, with few candidates finding an appropriate structure for their discussions. Case studies were generally missing, examples superficial, and there was a reluctance to identify or discuss more than two or three factors or types of leisure activity, despite the very wide range of possible valid choices.

Question 10

10(a) proved straightforward for most candidates, but (b) proved more of a test, with many generalized claims made about specific sports that did not stand up to scrutiny. In (c) "accessibility" was better understood than "affluence" but a disappointingly large number of candidates overlooked the importance of the word "growth" in the question

and therefore largely ignored reference to any temporal or spatial patterns of expansion/growth.

Optional theme F: The geography of food and health

Question 11

Question 11(a) posed little difficulty for most candidates. In (b) it was sometimes difficult to distinguish three factors in rambling accounts where ideas often overlapped or that explained the occurrence of the disease rather than its spread. Weaker responses were superficial and revealed a very limited understanding even of diseases they had selected as examples. There were some outstanding responses to (c) which looked at all the possible nuances of the question, including the occurrence of diseases of poverty in poorer areas of economically developed countries and offered lots of evidence in support. At the other extreme, the weakest discussions were very, very superficial and often were just a list of diseases found of poor and affluent societies.

Question 12

Questions 12(a) and (b) were correctly answered by most, but responses to (c) revealed an almost complete lack of understanding of "energy efficiency ratios". Many of the suggested reasons were irrelevant or inaccurate.

Answers to 12(d) were mostly mediocre in quality, with some relevant examples offset by major omissions. The use of "recent" in the question was ignored by some candidates who chose to write about the industrial revolution onwards. Discussion of the Green Revolution was credited even though it should no longer be considered "recent".

Optional theme G: Urban environments

Question 13

Few responses to 13(a) were convincing, but most scored some marks. There were some solid answers to (b). Many candidates found it difficult to structure their responses to (c), with weaker ones incorporating urban models that added relatively little of value to their response. There was more development of the location of residential areas by most candidates than of the areas' socio-economic characteristics.

Question 14

In question 14, parts (a) and (b) were well answered by almost all candidates, excepting for the occasional lapse in (b) into factors that were not social. Part (c) elicited a wide range of quality in responses. The weakest focused on national-level population control measures of limited or no relevance. Many of the strategies suggested, and the details of examples of cities where they had been tried, were unconvincing and failed to incorporate an evaluation.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should be encouraged to:

- ensure definitions of key geographical terms (for example, disaster, microclimate, geopolitical) are well understood.
- continue to work with candidates to describe and analyse data in all forms of maps, tables and graphs
- develop the skills associated with annotated diagrams
- emphasize to candidates the importance of learning all command terms, and of studying the question carefully before responding
- suggest to candidates when they are writing exam answers that they refer back to the question occasionally to avoid going off task
- help candidates recognise the need to include alternative viewpoints where relevant, and where the command term encourages it
- work at increasing the confidence of candidates to tackle questions involving topographic and other maps
- use up-to-date examples and case studies and remember to include specific locations and details
- guide candidates to structure their answers clearly when the question asks them to analyse/explain three factors/reasons for a geographical occurrence.

Higher level paper three

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 15	16 -17	18 - 20	21 - 25

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

- A few candidates confused “labour flow” with “financial flow” and wrote about aid or trade.

- Question 2 was markedly less popular that the others suggesting the concept of nationalism was a deterrent for many candidates. Even when this question was attempted, nationalism was not always well understood.

- Agro-industry was poorly understood as a category (beyond being a synonym for "modern farming" or "Green Revolution"). Many band C answers were environmental science-type responses masquerading as a geographical account of agro-industry - and a lack of any located knowledge tended to betray this, whereas a better candidate might have chosen to write about the specific local impacts of the Kenyan flower growing industry (supplying European supermarkets as part of an outsourcing relationship), to good effect.

- Weaker candidates typically struggle with politics. Question 1(b) produced some weak answers that ignored politics and focused solely on technology.

In addition to these knowledge gaps, three specific assessment objectives provided a hurdle for weaker candidates:

- **The requirement for synthesis** is often a weak element and the inter-linking of sub-topics from the guide is missing or under-developed in low-scoring part (b) responses.

- **The importance of valid supporting evidence** is under-valued by many weak and mediocre-performing candidates. Weak candidates often seemed to lack detailed case study material from located examples that would help them analyse and evaluate evidence and gain in-depth understanding so they can substantiate their arguments. Inaccurate data is sometimes easy to spot too (such as the assertion that "McDonald's is found in over 207 countries" when there are less than 200 countries in the world).

- **Providing a proper evaluation** will always be a challenge for weaker ones, which is precisely why it is highly valued as a part of an assessment that aims to differentiate between candidate performances.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

The examination generally reflected that candidates who had been taught in accordance with the subject guide were able to access it and perform well. Fundamentally, good candidates understood that their choice of question should be guided by being able to:

- produce a fact-rich answer to part (a) that demonstrated a depth of understanding of the phenomenon (migration, agro-industry or nationalism being the three choices offered in the case of the May 2012 paper)

- produce a discursive part (b) answer that, with some careful planning, weighed up both sides of an argument while drawing together a breadth of geographical ideas. The example below shows a plan for a response drafted by a level 6 candidate.

Politics	Technology
- MGOs (EU, NAFTA) - Financial flow governance (IMF, World Bank) - Free trade	- Time-space convergence – Facebook, Skype – cultural globalization - Internet. containers – helps TNCs and economic globalization / outsourcing
Both? China / censorship (Political limits to technology/Google/globalization – so political factors control where technology goes, ultimately?)	

Particular geographical ideas that candidates were well-prepared to write about included:

- A labour flow case study (even at the lower end of the ability range, a detailed though descriptive account was often produced)
- Cultural geography themes – again, there was often competent coverage even at the lower end of the ability range. The concept of inter-connectedness achieved through increased global interactions (via travel, tourism, labour flows, F.D.I., social networking and ICT generally) is seemingly well understood by most candidates
- resistance to globalization (this is quite well understood)

Some able candidates from a few centres were well-prepared to discuss the resurgence nationalism. Very few candidates appeared to experience any serious time issues.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1

(a) Most candidates could describe some effects of a major labour flow, or migration, usually with a basic framework applied (such as compared impacts for the source and host region). Remittances were widely written about, which was appropriate given their centrality to financial global interactions in a paper three context. A hallmark of better answers tended to be the adoption of an evaluative approach as part of the explanation: rather than simply listing the "good and bad impacts"', strong candidates volunteered to weigh up the positives and negatives of individual effects, such as the transfer of remittances (wherein GDP growth is seen as the positive and dependency as the negative). The causes of the labour flow were sometimes very thin in weaker

responses; in contrast, the best answers sometimes offered a political framework as a causal factor for movement (freedom of movement in the EU or governance of Mexico-USA movement, for example).

(b) Weaker answers were usually highly descriptive, with candidates doing no more than asserting by way of a conclusion that Facebook (shrinking world) [technology] is a "bigger influence" than EU membership [politics]. The strongest responses mounted a proper evaluation and perhaps concluded by recognizing that there are political limits to our so-called shrinking world; or that political processes shape the local geographical context within which technology is rolled out.

Question 2

(a) Some very strong answers examined the phenomenon of nationalization as an expression of "resource nationalism" (wherein the state re-asserts control of strategic resource operations, such as oil refineries owned by TNCs – as witnessed in recent years in Bolivia and Venezuela). Other candidates provided a thorough account of the xenophobic reaction to multiculturalism in EU nations (seen as a proxy for, or subset of, globalization). Contrastingly, weaker answers showed little understanding of what "nationalism" means; or made simple assertions that racism is now a problem in the UK, for example.

(b) Less confident candidates sometimes chose to simply agree that the world is indeed an unfair place and did not, or could not, offer a counter-argument, whereas the strongest candidates knew plenty about the pros and cons of the actions and impacts of the IMF, the World Bank and SAPs (from strand 3 of the guide) and could therefore mount a proper assessment of how the opening up to global interactions of China and India (amongst others) had impacted on aggregate levels of wealth as well as on distributions (at varying geographical scales). The best answers provided strong evidence to support their arguments and could offer a wide interpretation of "fair" that allowed them to build a wider synthesis of ideas.

Question 3

(a) Many candidates reached bands C and D of the markscheme by providing a range of valid examples of degradation linked to some degree with "large-scale" agriculture. Often, the explanations (for example, of eutrophication) were in-depth. However, a precise understanding of – or exemplification of – actual *agro-industrialization* was at times lacking. Thus, a very good answer might note that "cattle ranchers producing meat for McDonald's have to carry out their activities on an enormous scale to meet rising global demand. This is resulting in mass removal of forest both for ranching and for growing cattle food, for example soya in Brazil". (Incidentally, blanket statements were sometimes made which were not necessarily accurate – for example, deforestation in Brazil is now less due to cattle ranching and more likely linked to Brazilian agriculture's turn towards to soya production.)

(b) Candidates are, by and large, beginning to show good familiarity with cultural geography themes and concepts. Even weaker candidates could name drop cultural

imperialism and glocalization as important ideas to be reckoned with. Strong answers properly discussed the statement. For example, some good candidates queried whether glocalization should be seen primarily as evidence that globalization gets "halted" by cultural barriers (that require TNCs to make changes to their products); or whether the practice of glocalization offers proof that TNCs will always find ways to overcome cultural/religious/economic/political barriers. Good answers to this question often showed very good understanding of the synthetic aspect of the question and were able to weave their way around the guide fairly expertly.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The following hallmarks of quality answers are worth discussing with candidates as part of their preparatory work. These were mostly included in the November 2011 report but are reproduced here verbatim for the benefit of teachers who have not previously seen them.

- *Synthesis*: Teachers can insist that weaker candidates always devise a synthetic plan for their part (b) essays. A spider diagram linking different strands of the global interactions course to the essay title can be an effective way of making sure the AO3 requirement for synthesis is met.

- *Contemporary*: Candidates are best-off avoiding antiquated case studies that are poor examples of contemporary globalization. Accounts of the activities of Christian missionaries in Asia and Africa in the early 1900s, while providing some interesting colonial/historical background to modern globalization, can hardly be said to exemplify its present-day workings as satisfactorily as a well-chosen twenty-first century case study.

- *Concepts*: Ensure that candidates fully understand the meanings of key terms (for example, cultural imperialism, homogenization, network, outsourcing, MGO, financial flows, transboundary). It is sound practice to provide a brief definition of each key term as it is introduced in the essay. This helps examiners understand the candidate's intended scope of usage for each important term. Make sure that candidates are familiar with the wording of the guide, from which future part (a) questions especially will be derived.

- *Scale*: Help candidates develop a sense of scale, especially in relation to global hubs and the concept of a global periphery (get them to examine global internet connectivity maps, focusing on linkages both between and within countries, to assist with this).

- *Evidence*: Remind candidates that statements and arguments must be based on solid facts, examples, details, names, locations and supporting evidence. Unsupported statements are never likely to gain the highest marks.

- *Power*: Include some debates in lessons, with candidates asked to represent vested interest groups and powerful actors, so that their responses move beyond the superficial.

- *Perspectives*: Encourage candidates to consider different ways of answering the question. Weaker responses generally lack any mention of alternative viewpoints, and fail to explore all aspects of the question. Help candidates recognize the need, in discursive responses, to aim for a balanced approach, paying sufficient attention to each side of any discussion to ensure that any evaluation reflects the evidence presented.

Final comments

Overall, examiners were delighted by the standard reached by many paper three scripts. The introduction of the global interactions paper in 2011 required teachers of the course to put a lot of thought and effort into developing a new scheme of work. On the evidence of this exam, some excellent and hard work has been put in by teachers and candidates.

In closing, as we look forward to the next year of teaching, here is a remark that the chief examiner considers is worth taking on board. It was made by a paper three examiner who is also a teacher of the IB geography course.

“This is IB geography – where students should be able to take the theory and the concept and apply to their own lives or to wider reading that is given to the student in context. That said, there was not always much evidence of this in the answers to paper three ... it would seem that case studies were taught from a content-driven and teacher-centric perspective. While there was more diversity of thinking from last year's paper, the IB candidate should be looking beyond bland statistic and predictable case study citing and do more to apply knowledge in *their own local context*. There were few ‘local’ examples from where the candidate may be in school, for example. Dependence on widely available texts attached to the course was evident throughout.”