

May 2017 subject reports

## Geography

Overall grade boundaries

### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-13	14-27	28-40	41-51	52-62	63-73	74-100

### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-12	13-27	28-37	38-49	50-62	63-74	75-100

## Higher and standard level internal assessment

### Component grade boundaries

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

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

A variety of topics were covered in the samples submitted for moderation. Quite a number of centres presented reports on river investigations linked to the Bradshaw model. Other topics that featured included urban structure, migration, urban stress and sustainability, access to sports facilities, coastal processes, tourism, urban transport, urban pollution, urban environmental sustainability and urban gentrification. Sufficient data was collected by most centres and most projects were within the recommended word count. Candidates performed better in investigations based on testable hypotheses linked to geographic theory. Some centres presented work based solely on secondary data and consequently were penalized. A few other centres presented work based on topics that are not recommended in the geography guide. Such reports did not score highly as they tended to be descriptive rather than being analytical.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A – Fieldwork question and geographical context

Most candidates stated the fieldwork question, made links to the syllabus and provided locational map(s) though the quality of maps varied considerably. Some of the downloaded maps lacked good personalization and linear information. Some candidates failed to state the aspect under investigation in question form as required. Some of the hand drawn and scanned maps were not clear and therefore difficult to read. Satellite images were presented by some candidates but they were unclear and some not personalized.

#### Criterion B – Method(s) of investigation

Description and justification of methods used varied considerably. Top range samples with appropriate and focused fieldwork questions and a mention of sampling method(s) used scored well. Investigations that used questionnaires only did not achieve high marks because of limited justifications given for the choice of sample and methodology. The weaker samples failed to provide justification of the methods used. Some candidates used a lot of secondary data, which is not appropriate. Centres that undertook group investigations generated large quantities of data that provided candidates with a wider range of opportunities to achieve the highest bands in C and D especially.

#### Criterion C – Quality and treatment of information collected

Treatment and display of data collected varied considerably. Overall a variety of techniques were employed to process the data collected. Top range samples collected sufficient data, used statistical tests, determined confidence levels and took time to explain the results in terms of geographical context. Some candidates relegated the statistical test workings to the appendix. The most common techniques were graphs, pie charts, choropleth maps and use of base maps to plot data. Candidates who collected limited data had a narrow range of techniques such as tables and pie charts. Such candidates did not label the axes of their graphs and generally produced weaker reports.

#### Criterion D – Written analysis

Reports with focused fieldwork questions tended to have detailed analysis with clear reasoning and good linkages to the fieldwork question. Such reports were able to identify and explain anomalies, made reference to illustrations and used data to support statements in the analysis. The analysis part therefore varied considerably in terms of achievement levels. Candidates who did not have appropriate fieldwork questions and sufficient data tended to have descriptive reports. Weak reports did not make reference to either the fieldwork question, illustrations or the hypotheses formulated. Statistical tests were used by top range sampled candidates who used both the collected data and the calculated values to write well-reasoned and detailed analysis. A few candidates applied Spearman's test method to a small sample of data resulting in weak analysis.

#### Criterion E – Conclusion

Most candidates were able to write conclusions that were consistent with the findings, made reference to the fieldwork question or the formulated hypotheses and used either data or calculated values to support their concluding statements. A few other candidates failed to refer back to their findings.

#### Criterion F – Evaluation

Generally, evaluations were not well done. Most candidates tended to state some generic suggestions such as "collect more data from more sites; collect data over a longer period of time", and so on, rather than provide critical discussions about the limitations of the methods used. Not many candidates provided realistic suggestions for improvement. Where suggestions for further investigations were made, they were usually by top range candidates and were of good quality. Some other candidates evaluated methods but failed to suggest ways of improvements or extension.

#### Criterion G – Formal requirements

Formal requirements were generally well met by most candidates. Where full marks were not awarded it was because of poor referencing or lack of referencing. Few candidates placed important material in the appendix rather than in the main body.

### Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should be reminded to formulate and state a focused fieldwork question

and make explicit link to the syllabus.

- Downloaded location maps should be personalized clearly and have all the linear information. Satellite images will only be effective in showing location of study area(s) if they are big enough and clearly personalized.
- To achieve high marks in criterion B, candidates should be reminded to justify methods used including explanation of the sampling method.
- Candidates should be exposed to/taught a broader range of geographical skills including statistical test methods, methods of data collection and data display techniques.
- Candidates should be reminded to integrate criteria C and D and avoid running pages of illustrations followed by the text or vice versa.

## Higher and standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-8	9-17	18-22	23-29	30-36	37-43	44-60

### General comments

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

Patterns in resource consumption proved to be a challenge for many candidates and their knowledge of the theories of the relationship between population and resources needs attention. Patterns in environmental quality and sustainability demonstrated a better grasp of content but the concept of biodiversity, and its application, showed confusion.

Some candidates found it difficult to analyse the graphical materials in questions 1 and 2. The identification and description of trends showed the need for improvement and the allocation of marks in skills questions needed to be better understood.

Key definitions were lacking.

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

Populations in transition appeared to be the best prepared and candidates generally scored well. As much of the course is topical many candidates were able to use current examples to support statements.

There were few questions that were not attempted and time management was sound with very few unattempted or short essays.

Many candidates displayed good knowledge of examples.

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

### Section A

#### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify a number of trends shown in the graph and made particular reference to the initial growth from 1990–94, the overall growth and fluctuation. Full marks could only be awarded where three separate trends were identified and there was some reference to data. Many failed to gain full marks as they only selected two trends or they failed to use supporting data. Some responses were limited as they did not describe a trend but only stated highs and lows. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and commented on the full time range shown on the graph.
- (b) Many responses displayed good knowledge of the difference between the two types of forced migrant.
- (c) The majority of responses were accurate and well developed. The main political cause identified was civil war or conflict although state persecution did form the basis of many responses. It was pleasing to see that a large number of candidates could relate their studies to the reality of the present world as the bulk of responses referred to ongoing conflicts and explained why they result in an increase in forced migration. There was a greater range of environmental causes used to explain increased forced migration but again they displayed an understanding of modern global issues as they were frequently related to climate change. Responses often discussed the role of changing patterns of rainfall, increases in extreme weather and sea level rise as motivating forces for migration.
- (d) (i) There was good knowledge of the incentives used in national pro-natalist policies and the majority of responses used appropriate countries, such as France, Singapore, Russia, Denmark and South Korea, to initiate their discussion. The most popular incentives identified were parental leave, day care for children, financial assistance given by the state and campaigns to encourage pregnancy. Mistaken approaches were based upon identifying historic examples, using examples of countries that do not have policies, strategies of discouragement rather than incentives and focusing on anti-natal rather than pro-natal policies.
- (d) (ii) Many candidates were able to link pro-natalist policies to the needs of the selected nation. Good comments were made concerning ageing populations, dependency ratios, cost of care for the elderly and low fertility/birth rates. Explanations were in some cases too lengthy and contained a large amount of background information. A significant number of candidates departed from the question and referred to the advantages of the incentives for families.

#### Question 2

- (a) The majority of responses were able to identify the decrease in the cost of sending remittances and either made the point of stating it was for all regions or described the

decline of all three regions. Only a limited number also identified the fluctuating nature of the decline. Two valid descriptive points were needed to access full marks, and these had to be supported with data from the graph.

- (b) Valid comments were made by a significant number of candidates with exchange rates, shipping costs and commission being the most popular reasons identified. However, many failed to score full marks as they did not develop or exemplify their responses and others gave two separate reasons.
- (c) There were a significant number of candidates who gave two valid and developed reasons. The most common reasons related to whom the money was directed, the impact of financial inputs on the local economy and how money could decrease social disparities by people's investment in education and health. Good responses gave a focus on how remittances worked as a stimulus to decrease disparities rather than a simplistic statement concerning the transfer of wealth from richer to poorer countries. A number of responses did introduce exemplification which gave additional support to the points made but case study material was not common. Some responses also drifted from the scale required in the question which was global and not national.
- (d) Many candidates used this question to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of inequality. Although many chose examples that had an ethnic difference focus, a good number addressed other aspects of inequality that were based on gender or solely religion. Many responses scored well as they could give a valid country, identify the ethnic groupings and describe the inequality but did not pick up on the "explain" command term in the question. The usual reason given was associated with access to education but a number of responses did develop political and historic causes for inequality. Most responses used inequality in the USA, UK and Australia as their case studies but there were also some interesting explanations of inequalities based on ethnic differences in Israel, France and China.

### Question 3

- (a) The vast majority were able to identify the correct country.
- (b) Most responses gave an outline of each element of the question and this was accepted as long as the distinction between them was evident. Forest cover was frequently described in the context of proportion although the comments could have more precise. The distinguishing characteristic of biodiversity being in the inclusion of plants and animals was not always identified and thus full marks were not always achieved.
- (c) There were two ways to approach this question. Some examined reasons using a strategic approach to highlight why certain methods had been adopted, such as laws to halt deforestation to allow regrowth and thus expansion of the forest area. Others used an operational approach that focused on why forest area has increased such as to encourage ecotourism, increase the carbon sink or prevent soil erosion. Many were able to identify a reason and give some development and a significant number included examples as support. These included the Great Green Walls of the Sahel and China, reforestation in India and Senegal, and tree planting schemes in Haiti.
- (d) The key to success in this question lay in the recognition that the focus was on the reduction of biodiversity rather than the reduction of the tropical rainforests per se. Good responses often examined the loss of biomedical resources, the destruction of equilibrium in food webs and reduction in the attractiveness of forests for ecotourism. These were often developed to provide a clear explanation and supported with well-located

exemplification. Some responses, however, were related to deforestation of the whole ecosystem and not biodiversity, such as comments about the removal of a carbon sink. This highlights the need to read the question carefully to understand its requirements in the context of both the command term and the content that must be addressed.

#### Question 4

- (a) This was not done well in the majority of cases and generally it was only the high scoring scripts that gained both marks. Few candidates knew the measure for the global ecological footprint. There were more responses that gained credit for an outline of the measure but a significant number did not identify both land and water in their responses.
- (b) Most candidates knew why the ecological footprint of countries was increasing, despite their lack of knowledge of a precise definition of what it was. The majority of responses were able to identify the causes of rapid growth in ecological footprints with population increase, consumerism, improved living standards and industrialization being the main reasons given. Better responses were able to outline how their selected reasons lead to the increase in global footprint and focused on increased exploitation of resources, encroachment onto natural ecosystems and disposal of waste. These responses were also linked to examples and displayed a good awareness of global changes such as the rise of newly industrialized nations.
- (c) There was limited focus on the neo-Malthusian view and the majority of responses simply examined the Malthusian view. Whilst this was given some credit, as it forms an element of the required view, many responses failed to develop the theory in its modern context. A number of responses were able to outline the neo-Malthusian view that once carrying capacity is reached there are significant social, environmental and economic consequences. Many however just repeated the war and famine that formed the essence of basic Malthusian theory. Some gained credit for knowledge of the members of the neo-Malthusian group. A significant number misread the question, or lacked knowledge, and wrote in detail about Boserup.

#### Section B

#### Question 5

This was a reasonably popular question and allowed candidates to display their knowledge and understanding of the strategies used to reduce socio-economic disparities. The majority of responses focused upon global disparities but a number of responses did address the national scale with reference to countries such as the UK, China and Italy. Less common but equally appropriate were responses that examined disparities within major urban areas, particularly in cities in newly developed countries. Many responses were well structured and outlined a series of strategies with the various types of trade and aid forming the basis of most responses. The MDGs featured in responses that gave attention to the social disparities. When looking at non-global scales candidates outlined regional development strategies such as infrastructure improvements and economic decentralization. The attempts to address urban disparities were mainly associated with the improvement of informal settlements. Many responses outlined the nature of disparities before describing and discussing selected strategies. Better responses used the strategies as the foundation for the discussion of their success and mainly examined the reasons for lack of progress, although a number gave a more balanced view. The ability to

address the command term proved to be the distinction between average and good quality responses.

### Question 6

This was the least popular question. A number of good responses structured their response around the environmental impacts of climate change with reference to changing patterns of temperature and precipitation, increases in the frequency of extreme weather, and rising sea levels. These changes formed the basis of comments on their impacts such as agricultural production, population migration, economic returns and destruction by climatic hazards. Examples used were commonly from Sub-Saharan Africa, small island states and the USA. This is where a number of responses stopped and the reference to changes in global disparities was not fully addressed. Some did focus on changes in wealth by referring to the impacts of crop failure in Africa and made comment upon how agriculture formed the centre of economy for many African countries. However, changing disparities in wealth was not directly examined. Other responses examined how the more developed countries could manage the impacts of climate change more effectively, usually with reference to extreme weather events, but again the idea of changing disparities was not directly addressed. Some responses failed to look at disparities at all and simply explained how climate change occurred. Again, the ability to address the question directly and produce a discursive essay was the characteristic of a good response.

### Question 7

This was the most popular question. Many good responses did provide a clear structure that looked at the reasons why oil was important before an examination of the reasons why it was losing its importance. The outline of why it was important, and maintains its importance, often focused on the development of newly industrialized economies and their demand for power. Linked to this was reference to improved standards of living and car ownership, which was in itself related to population increase. A number of responses referred to technology and the ability to extract oil from inaccessible fields and new sources such as tar sands and fracking. The varying price of oil was also considered as a reason to increase production as demand increases for cheap oil and vice versa. Many responses looked at the environmental costs of oil and used these as a reason for its decreasing importance, explaining that the environmental damage caused by extraction, transport and burning of oil was becoming unacceptable. A popular line of explanation related to the rise of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal power. The geopolitical problems associated with oil formed a section of many responses where candidates looked at problems of exploration and nations wishing to become self-sufficient in energy. Less impressive responses simply gave descriptions of national groupings such as OPEC or outlined the advantages and disadvantages of alternate energy. Few candidates directly addressed the idea of importance.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should recognize the importance of question analysis to make sure the material they have learned is used effectively. They need to understand the command terms to give



their responses direction. The taxonomic difference between “state”, “identify”, “outline”, “describe”, and “explain” needs to be explained to candidates and they should practice writing a range of different responses to be more aware of the needs for each term. Candidates should make sure that they can structure an essay appropriately so that their analytical skills are highlighted. When using case study material, candidates need to make sure that it is applied rather than just regurgitated. There could be some value in practising techniques for skills questions so that candidates can analyse graphs, maps and tables.

## Higher and standard level paper two

### Higher level component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-7	8-15	16-23	24-29	30-35	36-41	42-60

### Standard level component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-5	6-11	12-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-40

## General comments

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

Difficulties were encountered when interpreting command terms. For example, many candidates explained when they should have described. The term “discuss” requires some evaluation for full marks. This was particularly the case with part (b) and/or (c) of each question where candidates did not use examples or fully develop their responses.

Candidates need to read the questions carefully. For example, in the essay questions many candidates tried to fit generic responses/examples into their responses and did not focus on the specific question.

Understanding of geographical terminology was lacking. Few understood the meaning of terms such as, for example, aquaculture, natural change, perception, carrying capacity and ecotourism.

Case studies are supposed to be within the life-span of the candidates. However, many were outdated, such as, for example, reference to the 1968 Bangladesh floods.

In some cases there was inability to describe a pattern, for example, from a map or from a table of data.

Some candidates demonstrated poor time management, for example, spending too long on shorter questions and not leaving enough time for the essay questions.

As in previous sessions, there were rubric errors – a number of candidates answered both questions from one option. In some cases candidates answered one question, crossed it out, and then answered the other question.

Poor handwriting often made responses difficult to read.

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

There was some improvement (compared with previous sessions) in the interpretation of graphs and diagrams, using quantification.

The essay questions also showed a marked improvement, using case studies and examples and the ability to evaluate the question.

Candidates showed the use of different, and up-to-date, case studies, rather than relying on popular textbook examples.

There was improvement in the use of sketch maps and diagrams to illustrate an response.

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

### Question 1

- (a) This presented few problems although some referred to water contained in the dam rather than downstream.
- (b) This was generally well answered.
- (c) Most candidates referred to a named river basin and explained strategies, although many did not consider the competing demands on water.
- (d) There was some effective use of case studies, with some good discursive and evaluative responses. Weaker candidates only described the negative consequences of flooding and found it difficult to discuss benefits.

### Question 2

- (a) There were few problems although some could not read the graph correctly or measure accurately.

- (b) There were few problems here although some did not understand the term “time lag”.
- (c) This was generally sound. Many candidates did not go beyond describing alternative management strategies, with little comparison of their effectiveness.

### Question 3

- (a) This was generally poorly answered. The characteristics of the oceanic crust, such as age, composition and thickness were often not mentioned. Most candidates described landforms on the crust, such as ridges and trenches.
- (b) Oceanic circulation of El Niño was generally understood and there was some effective use of diagrams. There were many weak responses on the explanation of wind and pressure systems.
- (c) Most candidates described overfishing and its effects; the better responses referred to both spatial and temporal consequences, with use of examples.

### Question 4

- (a) In parts (i)/(ii) there were few problems. However, some ignored the locational aspect, had no compass location or did not acknowledge that it was Australia. Part (iii) was well answered, but many failed to develop the effects sufficiently to gain full marks.
- (b) This was generally poorly answered. Many candidates did not understand the meaning of the term aquaculture. Conflicts were often not mentioned.
- (c) This was often well answered. However, there were many descriptive accounts that lacked focus on the impact on people and places.

### Question 5

- (a) There were many good responses, although a few incorrectly interpreted this question as adaptations to climate, rather than the weather, especially of agriculture (for example, irrigation).
- (b) This posed few problems, but several candidates did not develop the reasons for glacier retreat to gain full marks.
- (c) This was quite well answered, with effective use of examples. Some erroneously referred to changes in tourist activity in the Alps. The Amazon is not an extreme environment in the context of this syllabus and descriptions on the effects of the Xingu tribe, for example, were not credited.

### Question 6

- (a) This posed few challenges; most candidates were able to describe how characteristics varied with latitude.
- (b)(i) Many responses failed to focus on the word ‘differ’.

- (b)(ii) Most could identify a challenge, but few developed it sufficiently.
- (c) There were some effective responses, many using case studies such as uranium mining in Niger.

### Question 7

- (a) Many found this question difficult; candidates were unable to describe the global distribution and often did not get beyond stating that they occur on plate margins. Many described how volcanoes/earthquakes are formed at plate margins, which was not the question.
- (b) This was often well answered, but some did not fully understand the meaning of the term “perception of the risk” and interpreted the question as just the risk/effect of hazards. Some responses were overlapping and similar, rather than giving three distinct factors.
- (c) Some good responses on the effectiveness of hazard prediction. Better responses examined the reliability of prediction with a variety of examples in different circumstances. Some showed a belief that earthquakes can be predicted although a few correctly distinguished between predicting the timing and location/probability of an event occurring. Better responses went on to consider relationships between prediction of hazards and their impacts, especially with regard to richer/poorer communities.

### Question 8

- (a) This was very poorly answered; many did not refer to the diagram of the hurricane, especially with reference to cloud amounts.
- (b) This was also poorly answered; surface pressure differences were not known; many had high pressure in the eyewall. There was a lack of basic understanding of the characteristics of a hurricane.
- (c) This was generally well understood, but several did not develop each point sufficiently for full marks.
- (d) There were few problems here. Some good, discursive responses, and effective use of case studies. Many compared richer and poorer countries, rather than communities; better responses focused on communities within countries.

### Question 9

- (a)(i) Many responses did not describe a global pattern, or did not go beyond listing the cities and their tourist numbers, and explaining why these were the most visited cities.
- (a)(ii) This was generally correct. (Note: median is a statistic in the geographical skills component of the syllabus.)
- (b) Many did not fully understand the meaning of the term “ecotourism”. Concepts such as sustainability, the importance of local communities, and of education were often missing.

Strengths and weakness of ecotourism for local communities were not fully developed. There were many superficial responses.

- (c) This was generally well answered, with some good and evaluative responses. But there were many descriptive accounts omitting discussion of concepts such as a hierarchy and range, and the importance of technology and the media. The national sports league was not always identified. Some referred to only one named team, or used an event such as the Olympics. A few misinterpreted supporters for sponsors.

### Question 10

- (a) There was a mixed set of responses. Many referred to both environmental and perceptual carrying capacity. Both needed development for full marks.
- (b) There were some very confused responses with many not understanding the term “land value”. Those who logically worked through the response did very well. Common issues with this question included: not specifying types of sporting facilities; confusion about what the question was asking and responding with a land use model explanation with no link to sports; repeating accessibility but not developing/exemplifying.
- (c) This was a straightforward question which was generally well answered. Candidates showed good knowledge of case studies but in some cases there was limited evaluation to gain the higher marks. Some referred, erroneously, to Spain or a city like Venice.

### Question 11

- (a) This was well answered, with few problems using the map to describe the pattern using quantification.
- (b) Many were able to define relevant indicators but often failed to develop to show how they could measure the health of the population.
- (c) This was generally well answered. Stronger candidates showed good understanding of the concept, and limitations, of food miles, and considered other environmental impacts of agriculture.

### Question 12

- (a) There were few problems with these questions.
- (b) This was generally well answered, but some found it difficult to identify map evidence and relate it to differences in obesity levels. At times “mirror answers” were given. Often points lacked sufficient development for full marks.
- (c) This question posed few problems. Responses were generally good, with effective use of case studies, using malaria or HIV/AIDs. Some candidates incorrectly used Ebola as a relevant disease (the geography guide specifically states the three categories of disease to be studied are vector-borne, water borne, or sexually transmitted diseases). Ebola, Swine flu, influenza were credited but could not gain above 5–6 marks.

### Question 13

- (a) There were generally few problems. Some descriptions were vague and did not give directions or distances from the map. Some thought this was a country and referred to coastlines.
- (b) This was very poorly answered. Most candidates did not understand the meaning of the term “natural change” and hence gained few marks. Many confused natural change with family status (stage in life cycle).
- (c) There were some effective responses, using examples of housing management strategies. However, weaker candidates gave discussions about general aspects of sustainability in a city (Curitiba was very popular), such as transport and recycling, rather than a specific housing management strategy.

### Question 14

- (a) This was generally well answered and there were good descriptions of trends, using data from the graph.
- (b) Weaker candidates gave detailed accounts of strategies rather than strengths/weakness. Those who did mention strengths/weaknesses failed to develop their response fully.
- (c) Stronger candidates made effective use of case studies. However, many did not fully understand the meaning of the term “brownfield site”. There were many descriptive responses on urban redevelopment, and shanty towns, with limited reference to the effects of movement of economic activity.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are recommended to carefully read all parts of the syllabus, which includes the skills to be taught, and the preamble given before each option, as often there is valuable information provided there.

Relevant regions and topics need to be studied. For example, the tropical rainforest in the Amazon is not acceptable as an extreme environment; also, floods, wild fires and tornadoes are not included in the hazards option.

The importance of reading the question carefully and focusing on it needs to be emphasized, especially in relation to applying case studies and examples.

Candidates must understand the correct geographic terminology as it is expressed in the syllabus.

The importance, and meaning, of command terms needs to be emphasized.

It is important that teachers in Spanish carefully review the key terms as set out in the syllabus and ensure that their candidates are aware of the IB's agreed set of terminology. While it is perfectly acceptable that candidates write their responses using the vocabulary specific to their country, they must be able to understand and apply the key terms as stated in the syllabus.

More emphasis is needed on teaching geographic skills such as reading and interpretation of maps, graphs, tables of data and diagrams, in conjunction with the teaching content contained in the syllabus.

Essay question responses should include an evaluation, a conclusion and more than one point of view (if applicable). Often, essays were too descriptive and failed to develop a response that covered all aspects of the question.

The use of case studies/examples that are 20 years old or more, for example, the Bangladesh floods of 1968, is discouraged.

Teachers should make a greater effort to be creative in the case studies being taught. Where possible they should use examples that are local and relevant to the candidates. There is an over-reliance on common case studies such as the Haiti and Japan earthquakes, English Premier League, and AIDs in Africa.

## Higher level paper three

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-4	5-8	9-12	13-14	15-17	18-19	20-25

### General comments

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

Many candidates appeared poorly prepared to answer the essay questions which asked them to examine/discuss a proposition or statement [1(b), 2(b)] rather than to discuss a viewpoint [3(b)]. This was particularly evident in relation to question 2(b). Candidates were able to *explain* rising cultural uniformity but appeared oblivious to the demands of the command word *examine*. Too few were prepared to think critically about what is meant by 'uniform'; instead, they asserted that all societies were becoming the same (with a few exceptions) and listed the reasons why.

Many candidates struggled to apply their knowledge to the task set in part (a) of each question. Part (a) questions are not simple AO1 recall tasks. Rather, they are AO2 tasks requiring careful

application of knowledge to a carefully-worded statement. This was particularly evident in relation to question 3(a) - candidates wrote at great length about the environmental impacts of oil or timber production, and many noted that these impacts are becoming more worrying on account of 'population growth'. However, the question had actually asked them to relate these environmental impacts to the 'increasing needs of some countries' (with an expectation the candidates might be aware, for instance, of rising demand for raw materials in China.). To reach the highest markband, candidates were expected to address both environmental concerns (linked with one or more raw materials) *and* the needs of some countries. Similarly, in question 2(a), few candidates were able to present an response that applied knowledge of civil society actions or movements to the context of national resistance to global interactions (instead, they often wrote about civil society actions to protect the environment). In question 1(a), many candidates struggled to apply their knowledge of trading organizations and financial institutions to a statement asking them to explain global financial flows (instead they often debated the strengths and weaknesses of trading organizations).

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

Essay 3(b) was a popular and well answered question: candidates appeared to be generally well-prepared to discuss a controversial statement and provide evidence both in support and opposition to it, prior to arriving at a conclusion.

There were fewer cases (than in previous sessions) of candidates using their time poorly: the vast majority produced two substantial responses, as required.

Case study details were often well learned and richly detailed (which in many cases compensated for a lack of evaluation and discursive flair).

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

1(a) Most candidates who selected this question were aware of the existence of the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Significant numbers broadened their response to encompass the actions of NAFTA and the European Union, or other trade blocs. At the top band, candidates used terminology well and made reference to tariffs, protectionism and lending. The best responses explained how these organizations create 'global architecture' for investment and trade which can encourage financial flows such as foreign direct investment. They were therefore able to explicitly reference a larger number of financial flows as part of their response. Weaker candidates failed to keep a tight focus on financial flows and instead began to debate the merits of the WTO and IMF (which was not asked for). Many candidates made reference to indebtedness and debt relief (though not all did so in ways which directly answered a question about influence over global financial flows). Disappointingly, many candidates also blurred the distinction between loans and aid unacceptably: their responses explained that the IMF and World Bank exist in order to 'give aid' to countries who need it.

1(b) Many responses to this question were relatively disappointing. Responses were overwhelmingly descriptive and generalized, and often extremely naive in terms of the overall



picture presented of the world economy and environment. The question was intended to provide an opportunity for candidates to synthesize and evaluate a wide range of knowledge from across the course. They might, for example, have discussed the implications for financial flows between the core and periphery should global trade dwindle in favour of local production. Or they could have discussed the economic consequences of glocalized production (given that this can constitute 'locally produced' commodities). The implications for multi-governmental organizations were also worth exploring, given that the EU and NAFTA (amongst others) exist to promote international trade, allowing countries to build economies of scale in areas where they possess a comparative advantage, thereby bringing, in theory, economic benefits for all. In reality, very few candidates developed these kinds of themes. Instead, descriptive accounts were presented which frequently asserted that:

- more local production would create more local jobs and 'boost' local economies (no mention was typically made of what would happen to the people and industries which had previously produced food and goods for export)
- more local production would lead to greater use of pesticides and increased eutrophication which would be 'bad for the environment' (no mention was typically made of whether these issues might be equally applicable to local production currently taking place in in other countries where food is at present grown for exporting)
- more local production would lead to the 'death' of transnational corporations (no mention was typically made of the fact that it is transnational corporations which currently produce food and goods in local contexts everywhere).

Fundamentally, this question showed that many candidates had a poor conception of what is meant by 'local' and 'global'. The pertinent idea that when we buy glocalized food and goods from TNCs, we are already buying 'locally produced' food and goods featured in only a very small minority of responses.

2(a) This question was attempted unfortunately by a number of candidates who did not understand the meaning of the term 'civil societies'. Civil society is defined in the geography guide as: "Any organization or movement that works in the area between the household, the private sector and the state to negotiate matters of public concern. Civil societies include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, trade unions, academic institutions and faith-based organizations." Credit was additionally provided for candidates who focused on the role of particular ethnic, cultural or religious groups living within a particular state. Therefore an account of the resistance of the Amish to 'global interactions' (though in reality it is modernity that the Amish are resisting) was given some limited credit. Candidates using this example invariably struggled to articulate how the Amish might be playing a role in the greater resistance of the USA to global interactions, however. A pleasing number of candidates grasped the importance of populist movements in the USA and EU states in recent years. They wrote convincingly of the way Donald Trump's presidency had been supported by a network of local citizens and citizens groups using social media. Some candidates argued that the UKIP political party in the UK had grown from a small civil society organization into a full-fledged political party over time, and this was credited. Candidates needed to exercise care however when writing about the policies of *established* political parties and governments in resisting globalization given that the definition of civil society is an organization working 'between the household ... and the state'.

2(b) In common with 1(b), this essay question did not ask candidates to discuss the veracity of a viewpoint. Instead, candidates were expected to think critically about a statement and to address it in multiple ways using critical thinking about possible assumptions underpinning their argument. What does 'uniform' mean for instance? Does this refer to visual uniformity, or a deeper uniformity such as the homogeneity of culture and religion (which certainly *does not* exist around the world). Few questioned what was meant by 'uniform' and as a result were unable to access the highest markband. Instead, the majority offered a simple descriptive or explanatory account of the factors responsible for 'clone towns' or the spread of the English language around the world. Large numbers who had, to judge their responses, pre-prepared a discussion of *the extent to which* places are becoming uniform (*not* the question asked on this occasion) wrote at great length about the way Amazon tribes have retained their identity. A close reading of question 2(b) rules this out as valid content for inclusion, however. Amazon tribes neither live in cities nor are they becoming part of a uniform global society (at least according to those candidates who asserted that they *are not* as part of the response). Very good responses (and it must be said there were not a great many of these) were able to write in some detail about the reasons for architectural homogeneity in large numbers of world cities, and the role of certain architects as key players.

3(a) The most popular choices of raw material to write about were oil and timber. Copper, uranium and other metals featured in some accounts. Soya beans and meat were also accepted. Unwisely, a number of candidates selected plastic as their raw material (note that a response which focused on the 'increasing needs of some countries' for plastic could still reach the middle mark band due to *partial* application of valid knowledge). Amongst the vast number of responses dealing with oil, popular themes included: The Gulf of Mexico oil spill, issues affecting the Niger delta, the Exxon Valdez disaster (now a rather dated example), acid rain and global warming. It was common to see detailed accounts of environmental concerns linked with the use and production of oil to reach band D, scoring seven or eight marks. Failure to explicitly address the 'increasing needs of some countries' tended to limit most responses to this band, however.

3(b) This question was often well-answered and many candidates attained a band D mark of nine or ten marks. They did so by synthesizing a sufficient number of themes to frame a 'for and against' debate before arriving at a simple conclusion. The most popular themes included:

- the rising use of mobile phones in Africa (an argument against the statement)
- the failure of mobile phone networks to expand into the very poorest and remotest parts of Africa or the Amazon rainforest (an argument in favour of the statement)
- the global growth of transport networks resulting in almost everywhere being 'switched on' to some degree (an argument against the statement)
- poverty in some remote rural regions meaning that global flows such as foreign direct investment are not directed there (an argument in favour of the statement).

These four themes above provided a possible route map to a band D mark, provided sufficient evidence was deployed in support. The very best responses showed some critical thinking about what is meant by the phrase 'the world's most peripheral regions'. Some candidates explored the idea of extremely peripheral regions being found within high-income countries such as the USA or Canada, and discussed the extent to which groups such as Canada's First Nations people experience a shrinking world. Other candidates appreciated the almost

paradoxical way in which the *most* peripheral regions can become a magnet for developmental agencies on account of the poverty found there, thereby resulting in peripheral societies in the Sahel receiving frequent visits from television crews, the World Health Organization, etc.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are recommended to encourage candidates to:

- pay more attention to the assessment objectives for both parts of the question. Part (a) questions usually include two elements, both of which must be addressed for higher marks to be scored under the AO2 criterion. Many candidates ignore one of the two elements currently. Part (b) questions use command terms which will always require candidates to do more than merely explain points. They are instead designed in ways which are intended to encourage candidates to 'question the question' by considering the theoretical and geographical assumptions underpinning a phrase such as 'the world's most peripheral regions' or 'becoming increasingly uniform'. Many candidates would be well-advised to spend a little longer thinking critically about the essay title prior to beginning writing their response.
- use a wider range of case studies and be more selective in how using and applying this learning. Over-reliance on the use of a small handful of in-depth vignettes – the Amish, the Xingu or Dani tribe, Chernobyl, Bangalore, McDonald's in many cases – often results in candidates failing to reach the higher evaluative mark bands. Learning about more case studies does not necessarily imply more teaching time is needed because some case studies are taught currently in far more detail than is required, given that this paper should be supported with breadth, rather than depth, of learning (in line with the assessment design which rewards the synthesis of multiple themes).
- avoid wasting time drawing large descriptive maps of countries that add nothing to the quality of the evaluation.