GEOGRAPHY

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 12	13 – 25	26 – 35	36 – 47	48 – 59	60 – 71	72 – 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 12	13 – 25	26 – 35	36 – 47	48 – 60	61 – 71	72 – 100

General Comments

The standard of the two externally assessed components of this exam was similar to that of the previous November exam, despite the change of syllabus and examination format. Teachers and candidates have reacted well to the new requirements, which require a variety in the types of responses from candidates. Many candidates produced competent extended responses, which were well structured and relevant. Essays remain a challenge for many candidates who apparently regard them as a more difficult option. However, the standard of responses in Paper 2 showed little variation between essays and structured questions. The overall level of achievement in the internal assessment was marginally lower than that of previous years, although almost all the work submitted conformed to the new regulations.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- Learn a variety of examples and case studies from at least two countries at contrasting levels of development, and be aware of their applicability to particular themes.
- Practice writing answers under timed conditions using the mark weighting allocated to each part of a question as a guide to the length of answer expected.
- Analyse command terms, paying particular attention to “describe”, “explain” and “evaluate”.
- Be familiar with and use appropriate geographical terminology.
- Structure essay answers in a logical manner, paying attention to sequential development and synthesis.
- Use well-annotated diagrams to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Even when such diagrams are not required by the wording of a particular question, they may be preferable to text.
- Write legibly; diagrams and maps should also be neat.

Higher level Internal Assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 – 11	12 – 15	16 – 19	20 – 23	24 – 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There remains an interesting range of work submitted for moderation. For Section A, the physical themes of the syllabus, coastal topics were particularly popular and on the whole were carried out very well. River topics lend themselves to relatively straightforward pieces of work but they are usually carried out in a competent manner. The weakest topics usually concern agricultural practice in a local area and tend to be very descriptive.

In Section B, the human geography themes, the study of retails appears very popular and some interesting projects were submitted. There can be a very heavy reliance on photographs in these topics and teachers must always bear in mind the need to remind their students to fully annotate any images used. Teachers when instructing their students should also emphasise the use of a variety of types of maps, graphs and statistical techniques.

There was very little work that could be deemed unsuitable and centres did not rely too heavily on secondary data.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Success in this section depends on focused, appropriate hypotheses. Students should be encouraged to present their hypotheses after introducing the study area and the theoretical context of their project and so provide a justification for the validity of their hypotheses. Also the use of good maps for introductory purposes should not be underestimated.

Criterion B

This section is usually done at least moderately well and candidates often gain at least 3 marks.

Quite a few candidates do not fully understand the difference between sampling techniques, and the term ‘random’ in the context of sampling is particularly misunderstood. Students are often unable to justify the method of sampling chosen. Successful completion of this section should naturally lead into the collection of data that is suitable for a variety of analytical methods.

Criterion C

The very weakest candidates offered tables of data plus a descriptive analysis of the results obtained. In some cases the data collected was of a good quality and would lend itself to comprehensive analysis using a variety of maps, graphs and at least one statistical technique. This is really what the good student should be aiming for; clear, concise hypotheses that lead to the rigorous collection of data that can be effectively analysed using a variety of methods. When using statistical techniques, it is always important to test the significance of the results.

Criterion D

The effectiveness of this section relies heavily on the quality of section C for each candidate. Those who have merely provided tables of data will be able to do little more than describe what they measured. Those who use sketch maps, land-use maps, various graphs and test the relationship between variables using statistics will be able to analyse the data more easily. Few candidates achieve the highest band in this section although a few teachers will initially put them into this band when marking their work. This indicates that teachers need to reflect on the quality of the work needed to gain access into the highest mark band.

Criterion E

In this criterion the conclusions can be very good although there were fewer cases of good evaluations. Again teachers need to contemplate the purpose of an evaluation and steer students away from the 'I did it all wrong' mode of thinking.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encourages to focus on:

- the quality and justification of the hypotheses that they are testing
- the use of maps in the whole piece of work
- the effective use of sampling as a method of collecting data
- using a variety of analytical techniques

Standard level Internal Assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 11	12 – 15	16 – 19	20 – 23	24 – 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Coast and river studies continue to be the most popular topics selected at Standard Level.

With the exception of more able candidates who rigorously follow Criterion B, fieldwork reports achieve higher marks than research assignments. Weaker candidates tend to produce narrative reports with very weak hypotheses or question stated and thus their reports tend to lack any real focus.

A few centres submitted candidate work with very simplistic or self evident hypotheses or questions

Candidates performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The majority of reports were produced with clear hypotheses that were fully explained.

Often candidates would demonstrate a clear understanding of theoretical background but with insufficient referencing of sources used. Unintentional plagiarism was evident on a number of reports.

Criterion B

A number of candidates submitted research assignments with very little, if any, justification of the data selected.

Criterion C

Candidates who produced hand-drawn maps with accurate scales, a compass direction, a frame, key grid references and a relevant title and annotations scored far higher than those that merely downloaded maps from the Internet.

A number of candidates included some excellent photographs but rather than integrate them into their reports with the use of full annotations they used them with no reference to make their reports look more attractive.

There is a limited range of hypotheses where it is relevant to apply the use of statistical data.

Criterion D

Many candidates fail to make clear references to their maps and illustrations in the main body of their text. It is suggested that candidates state, for example, in their text, "with specific reference to Map 2 on page 1 (or below) it can be seen that….."

Criterion E

Many candidates are able to evaluate their data collection method but few take this a step further to make recommendations for improvement or extensions.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- There is a need for strong encouragement to candidates to not only include bibliographies but also to reference quotes and maps directly, word for word. There is a great deal of unintentional plagiarism evident in the majority of reports.

- Greater emphasis should be given to the word length. Generally, candidates who write over 1000 words lose the tight focus of their report and achieve lower overall marks.

- Where centres take candidates on residential field courses to gather primary data and to write up their reports, it is important to emphasize that not all material covered during the course should be submitted. Only two reports are required for Standard Level Internal Assessment.

- It is crucial that all teachers mark candidates' work and either submit a cover sheet, or write in pencil on the reports, to indicate how marks have been allocated. On a large number of reports, overall marks have been stated on the 3/CS (reverse) form but there has been absolutely no indication how the teacher has come to this mark.

Higher and standard level paper 1

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 6	7 – 12	13 – 16	17 – 22	23 – 29	30 – 35	36 – 50

General comments

This was the first time that centres for the November session were faced with the new format examining the new syllabus and it was reassuring to note that the standard of performance differed little from previous years. If there was any noticeable difference, it lay in the opportunity provided to the strongest candidates to show their knowledge and ability more fully.

The feedback provided by centres on form G2 tended to show overall satisfaction with the new format and presentation and most also rated the level of difficulty as 'appropriate'. Some concern was noted about syllabus coverage and, surprisingly, about the integration of the themes. It is important to note that candidates will always be expected to approach this paper in a holistic fashion. They should not anticipate that they will be examined on individual and discrete elements of the Core Theme.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

The responses of the stronger candidates reflected a depth of knowledge, included excellent case studies and showed a high level of skill in interpreting data and in the drawing of maps and diagrams.

The best overall score was achieved in Question 1, and the poorest in Question 3, although it is worth noting that the highest individual scores were evenly distributed throughout all three questions.

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

Question 1 – data on four countries in the southern hemisphere

This was by far the most popular question, with nearly 90% of all candidates attempting it.

(a) Countries A and B (Australia and Mozambique) were easily identified, but many struggled to identify country C as Chile and country D as South Africa. Recognition of the high rural population in the latter should have provided the right answer. Some marks were unnecessarily lost through an inability to justify the reasons for the choice of countries – listing the differences in the data could not be considered as justification. Some responses were also overly long, with comments made on every single element in the table.
Careless reading of the question led to some candidates writing on countries A and D, instead of countries A *to* D.

(b) Explanations for the factors responsible for birth rates in two contrasting countries provided few difficulties and were generally well answered. However, a disappointing number of candidates were unable to provide any quantification of the actual birth rates for their chosen countries and some of the answers provided were so unrealistic as to raise doubts whether the candidates knew what birth rates were: 547/1000. Another weakness, fortunately rare but nevertheless demonstrated by several candidates, was to give an account of the one-child policy of China – by no stretch of the imagination could this case study have been relevant.

(c) This question, requiring a discussion on the relevance of the indicators in assessing the level of development produced some well structured, thoughtful responses. The best showed a good understanding of the concept of development and provided a reasoned and justified assessment of the indicators. The weaker ones, on the other hand, simply described the indicators and made no attempt to assess their value. Such responses gained very few marks.

Question 2 – GNP/capita and HDI rankings

This was the second most popular question, with 75% of the candidates attempting it.

(a) Most candidates scored well in describing the relationship between the two sets of rankings, identifying the general patterns and the anomalies. The only common mistake made was in misinterpreting ranking value as an actual value.

(b) Candidates showed a good understanding of the Human Development Index and were able to comment on the constituent measures employed in determining it. Again, many lost marks thereafter by failing to make any attempt to assess the merits of this index as a measure of development.

(c) Very few responses gained full marks for this question on the consequences of long life expectancy, mainly because their answers tended to be generalized, despite being directed to make use of specific example countries. Most gave reasonably accurate indications of life expectancy in the country of their choice and many noted the longer life expectancies of females over males.

(d) Despite some good responses, this question on the problems associated with countries developing their resources proved to be difficult. There appeared to be a general misreading of the question and many responded in terms of the exploitation of resources, or limited their examples to one country only. The stronger answers considered both the internal and external factors that caused problems in developing resources.

Question 3 – the 'demographic trap'

This was the least popular question, attempted by less than 50% of the candidates and scoring, on average, less than half the marks available.

(a) An explanation of the 'demographic trap' presented few difficulties and was generally well done. However, the questions asked for an explanation, not just a description and many candidates failed to notice this distinction. (Again, was this because of careless reading of the question?)

(b) Many good, neat, and accurately labelled population pyramids were sketched to show the change in population structure over time, but few provided the necessary annotation, preferring to write lengthy text. While this was not penalized, it is worth noting that, in future, it may well be. Weaker candidates ignored the requirement to present diagrams showing changes in population structure and responded with diagrams showing changes in population, especially the demographic transition model, Lorenz curves and even Zelinsky's mobility model.

(c) This question probably produced the weakest responses in the paper. Very few candidates answered the question set by being able to distinguish between the population/resource relationships as opposed to human/population relationships and by providing examples to illustrate these different relationships. Many candidates used this question as a vehicle for presenting prepared answers on a series of topics, including Boserup and Malthus, over-

population and sustainability. In these cases, little was of direct relevance to the question and examples were often inappropriate or missing.

The type of assistance and guidance the teachers should provide for future candidates

As this is the first time that the new syllabus has been examined and in the new format, it is reassuring that so many centres coped well. For others, it has been a learning experience. The comments which follow are intended to provide guidance in both approaching the teaching of the course and in coping successfully with the examination.

Teaching the course:

There is a need to provide candidates with a clearer, more accurate appreciation of the world. General geographical knowledge in many cases is weak and candidates often appeared to have only a superficial knowledge of the areas or regions they were discussing. In these cases responses were riddled with statements such as "Sub-Sahara Africa has a hot, dry climate – or suffers from desertification", or "Ethiopia/China has infertile soils", or "LEDCs have corrupt governments", or "all the farmers are subsistence farmers – or nomads and are involved in shifting agriculture". Probably the best way to address this problem is to study three to four countries in depth (including at least one LEDC, one MEDC and a NIC). Such studies should provide candidates with a number of case studies, the knowledge of which could provide them with the necessary hard factual information to support answers to any number of examination questions.

The new course places emphasis on the inter-relationships between the different elements of the core and, wherever possible, these inter-relationships should be noted and stressed. Again, this is probably best done through the study of a small number of countries where comparisons and contrasts can be drawn. Posing questions, such as "is poverty the cause or consequence of high fertility rates in LEDCs?" or "is sustainable development possible in a rich country?" in either class discussions or homework assignments could encourage candidates to draw on knowledge from different areas of the course.

Examination technique:

The biggest change is probably the inclusion of the extended essay-type response and candidates need to practise how to approach such questions. It would be expected that responses should be structured and this implies some degree of planning. Candidates would be well advised to think in terms classifying the information they wish to include as demographic, economic, social, environmental, political or other.

There is a heavy demand for examples in the questions set and candidates should be advised that marks would be lost if this requirement is not met. A good knowledge is expected of the examples used. Again, a study of a few countries, as suggested above, could help candidates to support assertions with precise and accurate facts.

The time factor could be a problem. It is worth noting that it is expected that the time spent on any question is directly proportionate to its allocation of marks. Time could also be saved by using diagrams and annotated maps to replace text. Bulleted or numbered points are acceptable, but candidates should be advised that these should be fully developed and not just listed.

Practise in interpreting data is recommended. There will always be some diagram, table or map as stimulus material for each question and it is expected that candidates should be able to classify the information shown and note any anomalies. It is also generally expected that descriptions of the data should include some quantification.

Candidates should be strongly advised to be very clear about the demands of a question before they attempt to answer it. There were many responses marked "QNU – question not understood" or "QNA – question not answered" by the examiners. Careful attention should be paid to all the command terms and to concepts such as "population structure" (as in question 3b!). The poor performance of candidates, in many cases, could be ascribed to the tendency to pick up one or two words in a question and then to base their whole response on this (see the many comments made about misreading the questions above).

Higher and standard level paper 2

Higher level component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 10	11 – 21	22 – 29	30 – 38	39 – 46	47 – 55	56 – 80

Standard level component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 5	6 – 11	12 – 15	16 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 28	29 – 40

General Comments

Candidates followed the rubric conscientiously and only a small minority attempted both the essay and structured question within one section. Almost all attempted the correct number of questions, but the quality and length of answers usually diminished towards the end suggesting poor time management in some cases. The structured questions were relatively popular by a ratio of 2:1 to the essays. There was no significant difference in performance between the two styles of question.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

Essays and extended responses were often factual and informative and many candidates were able to write at great length on a ready-prepared topic, although some lost sight of the question and included much irrelevant material. Where specific case-study knowledge was thin, guesswork was a common tactic and multipurpose examples were strategically placed to fit the question. Few candidates gave much attention to essay structure and omitted both introduction and conclusion in their anxiety to write all they knew within the time limit.

Most candidates accurately interpreted the data given in structured questions, but some failed to observe the mark weightings resulting in lost marks or time. Maps and diagrams were rarely produced spontaneously, but when required by the question they were often inaccurate and sketchy. Poor hand-writing was a serious obstruction to marking in several cases.

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

A1 – Drainage basins and their management.

(a) Essay – This was an unpopular question at both HL and SL with below average marks. Very few defined "discharge" and appreciated the full meaning of "modification". Answers referred mainly to strategies for flood control with little reference to examples and only a few looked correctly at the wider economic consequences.

(b) Structured question – This was a popular question with a wide range of marks at both HL and SL. Marks were usually lost when there was poor knowledge of terms and when command words were ignored. In part (i) most understood the term "lag time", but had little idea of "throughflow" and often confused "baseflow" with groundwater flow. In (ii) answers showed a very good understanding of the causes of flooding in general, but not "flash" floods. In (iii) references to the form of the hydrograph were often missing and soft management techniques were seldom mentioned.

A2 – Coasts and their management.

(a) Essay – This was a very popular question at HL, but relatively unpopular at SL. The best responses were factual and well-supported by annotated sketch maps of specific locations with associated currents and local features. However, generalised zigzag wave patterns on a hypothetical beach accompanied by over-long descriptions were time-wasting. Some failed to connect longshore drift with modification of coastal shape, and the discussion of consequences was often underplayed.

(b) Structured question – This was a popular question, which was well done by many. In part (i) some confused cliff-face strategies with those intended for the cliff-foot. In part (ii) answers were often good and well-evaluated, but part (iii) was partly misunderstood with only a few candidates having a full appreciation of natural coastal evolution and the concept of dynamic equilibrium.

A3 – Arid environments and their management

(a) Essay – This was a very unpopular question that was poorly done at HL and not attempted at SL. The range of reasons covered by candidates was very limited and might have extended to such reasons as the film industry, scientific research and military training and energy generation. Many responses misinterpreted "problems that arise from attempts to overcome" as "arising from"… "the shortage of water".

(b) Structured answer – This was an unpopular question both at HL and SL with poor marks. The responses were particularly weak due to misinterpretation of the graph axis for rainfall variability in (i) and the failure to recognise a positive correlation. In (ii) most candidates produced simplistic definitions of aridity as a "lack of rainfall" in their attempt to describe its measurement. The remainder of the question revealed an inability to distinguish between areas of desertification and deserts. In many cases, an understanding of the physical processes leading to desert formation was superficial.

A4 – Lithospheric processes and hazards

(a) Essay – This was more popular at HL and SL, but performance ranged widely with some candidates producing excellent responses including detailed and relevant case studies. Weak

responses, especially at SL showed a misunderstanding of "mass movement" and included earthquake activity.

(b) Structured question – This was a very popular question that produced a wide range of marks. In part (i) many candidates correctly recognised that the table showed no correlation or a very weak one, but were unable to substantiate it. In (ii) it was expected that candidates would choose four very distinct factors and where two were closely related, such as rural/urban location and population density, but the quality of the responses was limited. Diagrams were disastrous in part (iii); they were difficult to read, badly labelled and failed to show the location of earthquake foci. Locational knowledge was very weak and the link between seismic activity and specific plates was seldom established.

A5 – Ecosystems and human activity

(a) Essay – This question was universally unpopular and produced some very poor responses. Some candidates confused positive with negative feedback and were unable to apply this concept to their chosen ecosystem.

(b) Structured question – This was a more popular question, especially at HL and marks were average. Parts (i) and (ii) were well answered, but (iii) revealed little understanding of either biomass or productivity.

A6 – Climatic hazards and change

(a) Essay – This was a moderately popular question, but only at HL. It produced a wide range of marks, with some candidates achieving the maximum. At best, answers were detailed and well balanced with plenty of hard scientific evidence. At worst, candidates confused ozone depletion with global warming or wrote emotional essays on the atmospheric ills of the planet.

(b) Structured question – This was the more popular of the two climatic questions and marks were average. This question was well-answered in part (i), but some did not understand the diagram in (ii) and made no reference to it. Failure to read the question was also a problem in (iii) where some candidates referred to several events in different locations.

B7 – Contemporary issues in geographic regions

(a) Essay – This was attempted by only 4 candidates in total and was misunderstood by most, producing very low marks.

(b) Structured question. No candidate attempted this question at either level.

B8 – Settlements

(a) Essay – This was a relatively unpopular question, and the marks were unimpressive.
Few candidates accurately located the rural-urban fringe and fewer still had any appreciation of the pressures. The best responses were those that dealt with a variety of pressures including environmental, economic and social ones. However, at both HL and SL, some candidates simply described the differences between the rural and urban area or gave reasons for rural to urban migration. Unfortunately, many responses were restricted to housing problems and discussion was limited to the MEDC.

(b) Structured question – This was the most popular question on the paper with a predictably wide mark range at both HL and SL. Many interpreted the housing data well, but were stuck for specific knowledge of case studies required in (ii) where guesswork played a part. In (iii) a

number of responses presented a random collection of urban issues often unrelated to housing problems. These included urban sprawl, social problems, gentrification and, at the lower end, descriptions of the models of Burgess and Hoyt. Evaluation also presented difficulties and some candidates produced descriptive responses only.

B9 – Productive activities

(a) Essay – This was an unpopular question at both levels, but generally well managed by those who attempted it. Most candidates correctly interpreted this essay title, but only a few explored its full breadth by discussing a range of restrictions on adoption including social as well as economic ones. Lack of knowledge of modern (post 1990s) production techniques was common.

(b) Structured question – This was an unpopular question with below average marks. Candidates accurately interpreted the ternary graph, but failed to justify their classification in (ii). In (iii) there was over-concentration upon TNCs and insufficient knowledge of internal factors which had caused rapid industrialisation. Japan was a popular but unconvincing choice due to lack of statistics, locations and a time context.

B10 – Globalisation

(a) Essay – This was a universally unpopular question with an average level of response. The effect of major change in communication upon global economy and culture was recognised, although transport was sometimes omitted and many were unable to assess the impact. The term "integration" was not fully understood and examples were often limited.

(b) Structured question – This was a very popular question with a wide range of marks and some very impressive responses. Candidates handled the data well in part (i). However, some missed the economic emphasis and disadvantages in (ii) and the evaluative aspect of (iii). In this latter part many responses did not refer to a specific indigenous group. Those who did refer to one had little knowledge of the culture prior to the advent of tourism.

C11 – Topographic mapping

This was a popular question at both levels. Responses varied, but none was outstanding and it is evident that candidates studying this option still need more technical practice.

(a) Candidates did not appreciate the detail required and none recognised the convex slope summit.

(b) Candidates were able to recognise photo features, but failed to locate them precisely. Some problems arose with marine features (processes) such as high-energy environments, which could not be accurately verified.

(c) Very few candidates calculated the scale accurately and some thought incorrectly that the photo had the smaller scale due to its smaller representative fraction.

(d) Some candidates used material that was not evident on the map extract, but only on the key, such as ferry terminals and airports. Responses were difficult to follow, in some cases due to weak locational references.

(e) Answers were limited in their appreciation of the pattern and hierarchy of settlement shown on the map. Although some identified linear patterns, terms such as "dispersed" appeared to be unfamiliar to candidates.

