GEOGRAPHY

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 24	25 - 36	37 - 48	49 - 59	60 - 71	72 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 25	26 - 36	37 - 47	48 - 59	60 - 70	71 - 100

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 was again a diverse range of work submitted and the vast majority of it was pertinent and had a Geographical focus which was narrow and appropriate. Southern hemisphere schools appear to have adhered to advice and some of the reports were truly commendable. The most suitable work tended to be teacher led in the sense that the hypotheses were devised by the Geography departments. Those who permitted students to submit fieldwork which was of their own design were less impressive and tended to result in greater variation in standards. However, in the case of one school the students all carried out fieldwork of their own design and the reports were exemplary, hence there is no compulsion to homogenize work but it does need to be monitored carefully.

The schools which used the local area or areas which were regularly used tended to produce sound reports. Most of the fieldwork was primary based and the best reports were supported by some secondary input. Most reports fulfilled the criteria well and there was perhaps more original work than in previous sessions. There was some in depth fieldwork on coasts, micro-climates and comparisons of reality in physical systems to models. Some work, however, on the sphere of influence of supermarkets was a little dry.

Fewer centres had weak hypotheses than previously. Those that did, however, tended to be unfocused and sometimes were difficult to interpret. A few were descriptive and lacked appropriate use of graphs and maps. Some schools produced reports which did not allow a great deal of discrimination between reports – they all had the same sub-hypotheses. Perhaps this is an area which could be developed and it would allow a little individuality, enterprise and help to discriminate.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Most hypotheses were narrow, focused and readily testable. The geography was in some cases inspiring and original. In most cases a theoretical background was incorporated which is to be encouraged and so too the inclusion of justifications. Where hypotheses were simplistic or weak this undermined the capacity of the students to excel. Mapwork ranged from excellent hand drawn sketch maps, GIS based mapping and well manipulated downloads to simples downloads or, in some cases, complete omissions.

Better reports included an understanding, in some depth, of the theory behind the research and this gave the report a clear focus from the outset. Some of the theoretical backgrounds were excellent and really set the context very clearly.

The locational context was better in this session with clear links between the introduction, hypotheses and specific locations used to carry out the field research. All of these elements should be inextricably linked to each other to create a strong introduction. This sets the standards for the report.

Criterion B

In most cases the methods were clearly outlined but justifications are still lacking from some centres. When something was omitted it is often a centre rather than an individual issue. This also applied to sampling – it is important to make the type of sampling clear and to incorporate detail of how this is done – random, systematic and some reference to sample sizes. Some centres, however, did this very well and in some depth making it clear why the sampling methodology was employed.

Criterion C

Better centres are consistently using imaginative techniques in graphing, correlating and using statistical tests. In some centres, however, the variety of graphs remains poor and some are producing page after page without any contextual analysis. Students should be encouraged to diversify. The best reports used a wide variety of techniques and in one case a series of images was used to show change over time which was very effective. Too many candidates are not referring to graphs and indeed images and many are not stating sources for photographs taken. The same image appears in many reports with no credit. It is important that teachers guide students on the strengths and weaknesses of particular techniques – this will help them utilize them appropriately.

Maps could certainly be used more frequently and effectively – some centres did this brilliantly and this is to be commended. In contrast some were poorly labelled, drawn and lacked links. The direct download, as referred to for criterion A, seems to be an issue of concern and should be discouraged.

Criterion D

The quality of analysis tended to vary markedly – some centres described whilst others had a truly discursive approach which really strived to explain trends, spatial variation and anomalies. In some cases the level of depth was excellent and the reports were a pleasure to read. Some were inspirational and a reflection of excellent teaching practice.

Criterion E

The best reports had sound conclusions referring back to hypotheses and accepting or rejecting them. Evaluations and recommendations for improvements and new ideas were better in this session and some were exceptional. The word limit was adhered to in all cases.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- state their hypotheses clearly near the beginning of the report. The justifications for the hypotheses should be linked clearly to them.
- avoid simplistic ("Yes/No") hypotheses, or those, from the outset, which are very predictable (this has been stated previously).
- clearly define any key concepts which are central to the work.
- use more annotated sketch-maps to show the location, choice of topic and/or sample points. These maps should have some degree of originality – hand drawn or at least manipulated to indicate personal endeavour. Maps appear to be given less exposure as time goes on.
- ensure that the quality and quantity of at least some of the data collected will allow for the application of statistical tests or correlative graphing techniques.
- ensure that statistical calculations are performed accurately and are appropriate to the task.

As in previous sessions, teachers should be encouraged to:

- have a group do one piece of coursework rather than asking students to produce independent work. In the case of the latter there tended to be a greater variation in standards. There are, however, exceptions to this but these pieces of work need careful monitoring.
- ensure that the fieldwork study involves the collection of sufficient quantitative data
- add comments to fieldwork reports, indicating the extent to which the work matches the assessment criteria. In this session few teachers did this – where they did it was very helpful.

Standard 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 was wide range of topics submitted for standard level, all relevant to the geography guide, component and level. The most popular topics were drainage basins and settlements and, in most cases, the schools developed fieldwork reports and only very few wrote research assignments. The schools that developed fieldwork studies tended to produce more homogeneous work and only in some cases the students wrote about different topics, on the contrary most schools that produced research assignments send a variety of more individualised reports although many of the samples did not include a proper locational context and were very descriptive and generalized. The main problem of the lower achievers was the lack of data and therefore the lack of actual processing. In that sense downloading a graph from the internet does not make up for data processing.

In terms of quality the range was broad from outstanding to the very descriptive with very little research. Most candidates made good use of maps and developed sound introductions making good use of theory. As well there was an important emphasis in sampling and reliability of the data and abundant use of statistics, what means an improvement when compared to previous sessions. Statistics used were mostly repetitive (Spearman`s rank) and not always the best possible choice for the given study.

The best reports contained abundant data and these were processed in many different ways. The quality of the maps, the graphs, the field sketches and in general terms all the data processing is to be praised. The use of annotations was witty and neat, the level of analysis showed depth and sophistication, a pleasure to read.

In most cases the hypotheses were developed by the teachers but there are still too many simplistic or unfocused ones, even some that can just be answered by `yes` or `no` or that needed no research to be answered. Some of the weaker reports did not even have a proper structure – just a chunk of text from beginning to end- or not even a main title. Sadly, still some candidates exceeded the word limit and had therefore to be penalised. It is necessary to remind that tables with text may be included in the word count if they are used as a strategy to reduce the number of words. In some cases the amounts of tables with data made the reading slightly clumsy. Some of these tables could have been easily placed in the appendix. As well some important maps or valid information were placed in the appendix rather than in the body of the text.

Candidates performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Many hypotheses were too simple or meant little challenge; nevertheless, a lot of them were narrow and focused, and reasonably testable. In most cases a theoretical background was properly incorporated and justified. Locational context was still weak in some samples. Higher achievers established strong links between the different elements of the introduction. Where hypotheses were simplistic or weak the options for further development were very limited. Mapwork ranged from excellent hand drawn sketch maps to simple downloads or even, absolute absence. Some candidates wrote research questions instead of hypotheses. It is necessary to remind that at SL research questions are only acceptable for research assignments and not for fieldwork

Criterion B

Most candidates produced sound justifications of the methods of data collection and a lot of them commented on sampling, but not so many on reliability and sample size. Still, the weaker candidates that failed to collect data and/or many of the ones that wrote research assignments, ignored this criteria. In this sense it is important to refer to the type of sampling – random, systematic and some reference to sample sizes.

Criterion C

This is probably were the wider gap is: whereas a lot of candidates collected abundant data and these were processed in many different and sometimes sophisticated ways by the means of maps, the graphs, the field sketches pictograms, there are still many others whose graphs were simply downloaded from the internet and, although they were all referred to, this is not acceptable practice as the processing of the data should be the candidate's.

Criterion D

Although there were many deep strong analyses, the general quality depended strongly on the quality and quantity of data collected and the level of data processing. The strongest candidates specifically referred to the data and draw conclusions from their own processing; still too many candidates tend to produce very descriptive reports with very little reference to the actual research. In that sense the fact of not being able to prove the hypothesis or the anomalies should be used in favour of the candidates as the accounting for it should produce richer dialectic.

Criterion E

Conclusions were generally sound and referred back to the hypotheses. Still in a few cases they could have been written even before the research was done as they responded more to the students pre-conceptions than to the actual findings. Evaluations were present in most cases although still some students use it as an opportunity to blame the others for the limitations rather than writing a proper scientific reflection about the limitations of their own study.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should be encouraged to:

- Encourage the students to write testable but not simplistic hypotheses.
- Include comments on the allocation of marks in the samples.
- Encourage students to place photos, graphs, and maps appropriately within the text. All these should be numbered /labelled and referred to within the text.
- Ensure the students collect enough and reliable data.
- Make sure all the IA forms are properly completed.

Students should be encouraged to:

- Link location to theory and map sample sites.
- State their hypotheses clearly near the beginning of the report. The justifications for the hypotheses should be linked clearly to them.
- Stick to the word limit and annotate it accurately on the cover of the work.
- Place questionnaires within the appendix but the data presentation within the text.
- Ensure that the quality and quantity of the data collected will allow for the application of statistical tests and graphing techniques.

Higher and standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 23	24 - 29	30 - 35	36 - 50

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 23	24 - 29	30 - 35	36 - 50

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

This session very few candidates chose to answer question 3 and those that did tended to do poorly. Question 3 focused mainly on the resources section of the Core. On the whole there was a tendency for many of the longer (d) type questions, responses tended to be over-generalized.

Some candidates are still struggling to make effective use of detailed case studies/ examples. In some extreme cases entire continents are still used when the question clearly asks for a country. Africa is still being referred to as a country in some answers. Candidates should be encouraged to illustrate their work, where appropriate, with well-drawn, clear sketch maps and diagrams, thus demonstrating their skills, knowledge and understanding.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

Most candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the sections based on population and development but knowledge of the resources section was sometimes more limited. This was mostly reflected in the choice of questions with question 1 being the most popular and question 2 the second most popular. Most showed a proper understanding of the command terms used in all of the questions. There was the odd case where some candidates wrote far too much given the demands of the question. The focus needs to be on quality and not quantity. There was large-scale evidence of planned longer responses and as a result often the outcome was a well structured, sophisticated answer. Graph interpretation skills were generally of a high standard as evidenced in the many excellent responses in the early questions of Question 1 and 2. Very few candidates answered more than two questions.

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

Question 1

Was the most popular question with most candidates choosing it.

a) Most of the candidates clearly identified the trends of each of the 2 rates and quantified them.

b) Some very strong responses with well-developed reasons for the decline in global fertility. A wide array of reasons were accepted, varying from increased access and use of contraception to rapid urbanization in some parts of the world. Occasional responses tended to list and not develop their three reasons and as a result failed to achieve the second mark.

c) Many candidates misinterpreted this question and gave an explanation of why mortality rates are high in general in certain countries and did not answer the question, which was to explain why in certain countries mortality rates are increasing. Those candidates that did pick up on this temporal element wrote excellent responses referring to the increased mortality linked for example to an aging population or to the impacts of HIV AIDS on the mortality rates of some Sub Saharan countries.

d) There were many different named diseases but HIV/AIDS and malaria were by far the most popular and the most detailed in terms of the impacts. The best answers were when a single country case study was used. It was more difficult to see the socio-economic costs of the disease when the case study was based on the whole of a continent.

Many answers made good use of statistics however there were an equal number that obviously made up figures which were often outrageously incorrect, candidates should avoid using figures unless they are confident that they are reflective of the reality they are writing about. Many answers had a preamble on the disease that left little time for a detailed discussion of impacts.

Question 2

Was very popular with the majority of candidates.

a) Most candidates have a clear understanding of this term and were able to explain that it is an unbalanced diet and to explain that this can result from both under and over consumption.

b) (i) The vast majority described the relationship correctly, identifying the anomalies and quantifying the correlation.

(ii) A limited number of candidates could adequately explain why countries with a large % employed in agriculture tend to have the highest levels of malnutrition. A large number of candidates ignored the graph and explained why LEDC's have high malnutrition. This was unfortunately not answering the question. There were some excellent responses referring to the vagaries of subsistence farming, the switch to cash crops, the fact that most subsistence crops are carbohydrates etc.

c) The majority of the candidates identified the Human Development Index as a composite indicator. Some other alternate indexes were more rarely identified such as the Human Poverty Index or the Gender Empowerment Measure. On the whole most candidates could identify the variables utilized in the index and had no problem evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. If a candidate could not identify a composite index it was very difficult for them to score many marks on this question.

d) The best responses were specific to the country of their choice and gave a very clear examination of the issues influencing its level of economic development. These issues tended to be internal and external as well as social, demographic, political, environmental and spatial. Sketch maps were sometimes used to explain spatial differences in economic development within a country but these were often not properly utilized. Some very weak responses gave a very colloquial discussion about their own country's level of development often ignoring the question completely. Answers need to be specific with attention to geographical detail. In some instances candidates tried to 'squeeze' something they had studied into this answer even though it did not fit, a common example being China's One Child Policy. These answers often gave a detailed explanation of the policy with a vague comment on how this has impacted upon China's economic development. Another common failure was the inability to link factors to economic development and so descriptive answers resulted.

Question 3

Very few candidates attempted this question so the comments below are based on very few scripts.

a) (i) On the whole candidates were familiar with the terms substitution and recycling and managed to deduce these from the diagram.

(ii) Many candidates struggled with identifying a third method. Most who answered correctly made some reference to conservation but reuse was very rarely suggested.

b) Most answers were generalized with little factual information and no clear specific substitution scheme.

c) The best responses selected a fossil fuel and demonstrated how the spatial distribution of global production had changed. There were some strong responses that also looked at how water production/supply has changed over time on a local or regional scale. Sketch maps were not used to any great extent.

d) The responses to this question tended to be either excellent or very weak. Some wrote about a sustainable development project and completely ignored the question. Others gave an excellent balanced response using examples to either support or disagree with the statement.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should insist on the use of detailed case studies to address questions (d) properly and reach a high grade according to the mark bands. Candidates should be encouraged to use sketch maps where appropriate. Through the use of old exam questions students should become aware of how much detail is needed in an answer as it was evident that some spent too much time on one question and struggled to complete the next one. Students must be familiar with command words used in the questions such as describe, examine, suggest, discuss and make sure that their answers are pertinent and accurate. As mentioned earlier though, there seemed to be marked improvement from earlier sessions. Answers that follow a simple plan are often rewarded with high marks, particularly in the longer response questions of 10 marks.

Higher and standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 9	10 - 19	20 - 29	30 - 38	39 - 46	47 - 55	56 - 80

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 27	28 - 40

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

Generally candidates' knowledge of all areas of the syllabus was sound and there were many relevant and detailed case studies used. It was pleasing to see relevant diagrams being used to enhance answers.

Some concern remains about candidates' understanding of key geographical terms. Common terms were sometimes used in ways that revealed candidates' uncertainty about their precise meanings. This diminished the clarity of responses to many questions. Poorly defined terms included soil and rock (questions 1bii, 5a, 5biv), erosion, as opposed to weathering (2bii and 2biii), urban (10biii) and globalization (10a, 10biii), which appeared in many responses to be equated with development.

Many candidates failed to draw sufficient evidence from the stimulus material provided such as the graphs and topographic map. Many responses demonstrated a good grasp of geographic knowledge but failed to apply it adequately to the specific demands of the question set.

Some responses were too generalized and lacked sufficient details, correct geographic terminology, examples or evidence. Responses to Section C (Topographic Mapping) were especially disappointing.

Some candidates struggled with evaluative skills, which meant that their responses could not reach markbands E/F.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skills demonstrated

The best responses were enhanced by well-chosen, contemporary and detailed examples. Relatively few candidates fail to include any examples or factual details and there were few out-dated or inappropriate case studies. It is a welcome development to see an increasing number of references to candidates' local areas, and to places where fieldwork has been carried out.

Skills in annotated diagrams remain weak. The interpretation of command terms is improving. Many candidates have been well trained in the skills of graph interpretation.

Geographic skills were generally well demonstrated in reading the maps and diagrams that accompanied the questions. Stronger responses cited data accurately and appropriately.

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

A1 Drainage basins and their management

a) This was not popular. Responses revealed a disproportionate knowledge of lower courses, with few candidates writing convincingly about upper courses. If present, examples were often vague or their precise location or details were inaccurate. Weaker responses were often descriptive, instead of addressing processes. Using widely accepted technical terms would save time for some candidates.

b) In part (i) many candidates knew drainage density, and almost all answered (b) and (c) correctly. Unfortunately, many candidates equated drainage patterns in (ii) with drainage density, and even if three correct factors were stated, the explanations were inadequate.

   Most answers to (iv) showed a reasonable understanding of how urban areas affect hydrology, although some appeared unclear about the precise limits suggested by "urban".

A2 Coasts and their management

a) This was quite popular, but responses often failed to focus on conflicts, and provided lengthy descriptive accounts of management and mitigation techniques, with no clear link to conflict established. The best accounts were outstanding, referring to a variety of human-human and human-Nature conflicts.

b) This was very popular, though very few candidates scored full marks for parts (i) or (ii). The raised beach was rarely identified, and explanations in (ii) often lacked depth or precise terminology. Better responses to (iii) included well-chosen examples; weaker responses were more descriptive. The emphasis on why success was difficult to achieve was apparently missed by some candidates.

A3 Arid environments and their management

a) Not a popular choice and responses tended to be limited to a very narrow range of opportunities.

b) This was more popular. Almost all candidates did well on (i) and (ii). While there were some excellent responses to (iii), many candidates had no idea why arid areas receive little precipitation. Responses to (iv) were particularly disappointing, with far too many inaccurate generalisations, and showing little evidence of any pre-planning.

A4 Lithospheric processes and hazards

a) This was a popular question and there were some excellent responses with a good range of examples. Weaker responses tended to agree with the statement without attempting to present any counter-arguments.

b) Terminology was often weak. Most candidates answered (i) and (ii) satisfactorily but island arc formation in (iii) was often confused with hotspots. Most candidates had an adequate knowledge of the benefits of volcanic activity, and many used examples effectively.

A5 Ecosystems and human activity

a) This was most frequently attempted with reference to the tropical rain forest but with little reference to structure. Details were often lacking.

b) Most candidates were able to identify the boundaries correctly in (i) and explain earthquakes in (ii).

In (iv) the responses were a little disappointing with only a few examining the distribution and really linking this to types of activity. The distinction between volcanic activity at destructive and constructive boundaries, and at hot spots, appeared to be not well understood.

A5 Ecosystems and Human Activity

a) The few attempts at this essay were weak, relying on generalizations with insufficient supporting facts. Those who selected a specific, small scale ecosystem, which they knew, invariably did better. Understanding of the interactions between abiotic and biotic components was weak.

b) This was more popular, and generally better answered, though relatively few candidates offered a correct definition of biomass in part (i). In (ii), trends were well described, with quantification, and in (iii) there were some sensible suggestions for changes in biomass. In part (iv) few candidates really understood the terms resilience and fragility and discussions tended to focus on rainforests in their broadest sense. Specific knowledge of the functioning of the chosen ecosystem was often weak.

A6 Climatic Hazards and Change

a) Was a less popular choice than (b) There was some sound knowledge shown of El Niño and La Niña, and of their effects on climate and human activities. In weaker responses, knowledge tended to be generalized, and some candidates appeared to think that El Niño and La Niña are a single phenomenon.

b) Was a popular choice with almost all getting maximum marks for (i) and (ii). In (iii), tornadoes were not well understood, and often confused with tropical cyclones (hurricanes). In (iv) most candidates understood that the human response is related to development, and the stronger responses provided excellent supporting details from a range of recent major weather events.

B7 Contemporary issues in geographical regions

This section was answered by too few candidates for any reliable generalizations to be made.

B8 Settlements

a) Was not a popular choice. Many provided only a limited number of different points, and failed to grasp the idea that retailing varies spatially, depending on the nature of the goods involved. Retail patterns in LEDCs were largely unknown. The best answers came from candidates who had studied their local urban area.

b) This was an extremely popular question. In part (i) most managed to describe the contrasts readily, though some strayed into explanations, and others made statements that could not be justified by the photograph. In part (ii) there was some sound reasoning but explanations often lacked depth or did not relate the reasoning to the photograph. In (iii) there were some excellent responses, with a wide variety of sound case studies and strategies.

B9 Productive activities: aspects of change

a) Was unpopular and performance was generally weak, with insufficient evidence for many of the statements offered.

b) Was very unpopular, and no general statement can be made about responses.

B10 Globalization

a) This was quite a popular choice. The main problem was retaining focus on cultural factors and specifically on cultural diversity. This was a challenging task for many as changes in cultural traits or changing motives (e.g. performing dances for tourists for profit rather than for traditional reasons) is not necessarily symptomatic of a reduction in diversity. Similarly the arrival of a McDonald's does not necessarily make the culture of a place any less diverse, but may in fact have the opposite effect.

b) This was very popular. In (i) most were able to pick out the trend, though some failed to offer any explanation, as required by the question. In part (ii) most candidates were able to suggest reasons for increased rates of globalisation in relation to transport evolution. The best responses in part (iii) showed a clear understanding of the impediments to globalisation in some regions or countries. However, too many candidates limited themselves to only a few simple ideas, and offered no solid evidence for their claims.

C11 Topographic mapping

This was a moderately popular question. Despite significant improvements in many centres in topographic mapping skills, overall performance on this question remained disappointing. Overall, there is a discernible difference between the standard of map reading required in the early parts and of the map interpretation needed for the final two parts.

Most candidates managed (a) (b) and (c) satisfactorily. Most annotated maps in (d) were rudimentary, commonly with incorrect proportions, no conventions such as scale, and lacking any names. If included, annotations tended to be brief, simplistic, and often strayed beyond relief and drainage into settlements and communications.

Precise map evidence was often lacking in (e) where many candidates found it difficult to stay on task. Many responses offered some description, but lacked any attempt at explanation.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Ensure definitions of key geographical terms (e.g. urban, erosion, globalization) are well understood.
- Continue to practise describing and analysing data in all forms of maps, tables and graphs, and to improve the quality of annotated diagrams. Make diagrams/maps worthwhile and large enough to be seen.
- Practice drawing annotated maps and diagrams.
- Practice discursive writing ("discuss") which involves presenting alternative, and often contrary, points of view.
- Learn command terms. Read and re-read the question before responding and then refer back to the question occasionally to avoid going off task.
- Work on map reading skills and interpretation, especially the use of map evidence, as distinct from speculation.
- Use up-to-date case studies and include specific location/s and details.
- Improve examination time management by taking careful note of the mark weighting of questions to judge how much to write.
- Practice writing examination answers under timed conditions.

The new syllabus (first examinations 2011) will deal explicitly with contestable topics like climate change and globalization. It is imperative that future candidates see these as opportunities to employ their knowledge, skills and understanding, as opposed to writing exhortative responses, no matter how strong their personal feelings on such issues.