

2012 HSC Notes from the Marking Centre – Geography

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Introduction

This document has been produced for the teachers and candidates of the Stage 6 Geography course. It contains comments on candidate responses to the 2012 Higher School Certificate examination, indicating the quality of the responses and highlighting their relative strengths and weaknesses.

This document should be read along with the relevant syllabus, the 2012 Higher School Certificate examination, the marking guidelines and other support documents developed by the Board of Studies to assist in the teaching and learning of Geography.

General comments

Teachers and candidates should be aware that examiners may ask questions that address the syllabus outcomes in a manner that requires candidates to respond by integrating their knowledge, understanding and skills developed through studying the course. It is important to understand that the Preliminary course is assumed knowledge for the HSC course.

Candidates need to be aware that the mark allocated to the question and the answer space (where this is provided on the examination paper) are guides to the length of the required response. A longer response will not in itself lead to higher marks. Writing far beyond the indicated space may reduce the time available for answering other questions.

Candidates need to be familiar with the Board's [Glossary of Key Words](#), which contains some terms commonly used in examination questions. However, they should also be aware that not all questions will start with or contain one of the key words from the glossary. Questions such as 'how?', 'why?' or 'to what extent?' may be asked, or verbs that are not included in the glossary may be used, such as 'design', 'translate' or 'list'.

Teachers are reminded that pages 16 and 17 of the syllabus outline the geographical skills and tools – including fieldwork skills – that must be covered during the Stage 6 course.

Candidates are reminded that:

- the Stimulus Booklet may provide useful information and/or material for use in a variety of their responses
- appropriate case studies and/or examples should be used to illustrate or give relevance to the geographical information in the extended response questions

Section II

Question 21

- (a) In better responses, candidates correctly found the two locations from the topographic map, and recognised the start and end heights for both Mt. Marsden and the mine on the cross-section. In better response, candidates showed the correct elevations for all features that appeared along the transect and the transect was marked accordingly. These candidates identified Shoal Bay and Western Cove from the topographic map as areas that were at sea

level. They also correctly located two features that appeared along the transect and marked them on the cross-section.

In weaker responses, candidates did not find either of the locations on the topographic map, and therefore had incorrect start and end heights on the cross-section. This made it difficult to show the correct elevation of features along the transect on the cross-section. Both features and their locations needed to be correctly positioned on the cross-section.

- (b) In better responses, candidates knew the vertical exaggeration formula, applied it correctly, and obtained the necessary data to calculate the vertical exaggeration. In these responses, candidates showed how many times the cross-section had been exaggerated.

In weaker responses, candidates did not know the vertical exaggeration formula and/or how to apply it correctly and showed incorrect data in the equation.

- (c) In better responses, candidates located both locations on the topographic map and worked out local relief and distance. In these responses, candidates had a clear understanding of what the contour interval was and determined the height of the lighthouse. In these responses, candidates knew the gradient formula and applied it correctly. Candidates expressed their answer as a ratio either numerically or as a statement.

In weaker responses, candidates did not correctly locate the two features required on the topographic map which led to the incorrect calculation of local relief or an incorrect understanding of the contour interval. In these responses, candidates did not apply the formula of gradient and incorrectly expressed their answer as a decimal rather than applying their answer geographically

Question 22

- (a) In better responses, candidates demonstrated an understanding of biophysical interactions and how they function in an ecosystem. In these responses, candidates clearly showed in general terms how the interaction helped create a diverse ecosystem and highlighted the importance of the interaction to the ecosystem. In many of these responses, candidates referred to specific examples and how they produce diverse ecosystems, eg aspects of the biophysical environment such as high levels of precipitation and high temperatures were linked to the production of a tropical rainforest ecosystem.

In weaker responses, candidates mentioned human impacts rather than biophysical interactions. In many responses, candidates identified a basic biophysical interaction but did not link this to how it made a diverse ecosystem. These candidates simply stated a process that operated in the biophysical environment, for example, rainfall.

- (b) In better responses, candidates identified a change that affects the functioning of an ecosystem. They provided clear examples and often used statistics to support their description of how the change affects the functioning of an ecosystem. These candidates discussed a range of ways that the functioning of the ecosystem was affected by the particular change.

In weaker responses, candidates wrote about the natural processes that happen within the ecosystem (such as tides in intertidal wetlands), rather than an actual change (such as rising sea levels). Many candidates misinterpreted the question and used examples that did not lend themselves to answering or supporting their response.

- (c) In better responses, candidates discussed a range of different impacts in depth and detailed how each impact affected the ecosystem at risk. In these responses, candidates used appropriate geographical terminology and supported their response with relevant, accurate examples from the ecosystem studied. In many responses, candidates focused on the negative rather than the positive impacts.

In weaker responses, candidates wrote about positive and negative human impact rather than one or the other. In many responses, candidates wrote about human impacts on the environment without discussing one specific ecosystem, or listed human impacts without any detail on how they affected the ecosystem. Many candidates misinterpreted the question and used examples that did not lend themselves to answering or supporting their response.

Question 23

- (a) In better responses, candidates named and clearly outlined the main features of the urban dynamic of change and its operation in a specific country town or suburb. These responses referred to a specific suburb or country town example.

In weaker responses, candidates did not correctly outline the main processes occurring in their chosen urban dynamic or they incorrectly named an urban dynamic.

- (b) In better responses, candidates clearly indicated the spatial characteristics and features of world cities. They stated that world cities are predominantly located in the northern hemisphere (North America, Western Europe, and North Asia) and in the developed world. In these responses, candidates identified that world cities are located in areas of powerful economic and cultural authority. Many candidates illustrated their response by emphasising the dominance of world cities over their geographical region and their operation within global networks. In better responses, candidates were able to name the major world cities and their networks, eg London (Europe), New York (North America) and Tokyo (North Asia) and sometimes included the names of secondary world cities.

In weaker responses, candidates often incorrectly described the spatial distribution of mega cities rather than world cities. In other responses, candidates concentrated on only the role of world cities.

- (c) In better responses, candidates accounted for the social structure of a large city in the developed world by describing the social structure and then providing comprehensive reasons for the spatial patterns of advantage and disadvantage of that city. In better responses, candidates used statistics and examples to support their answer.

In weaker responses candidates wrote about the social structure of a mega city in the developing world. In other responses, candidates neglected the directive term and failed to account for the social structure.

Question 24

- (a) In better responses, candidates clearly identified an economic activity and indicated the main features of this activity. These responses made relevant and appropriate references to the activity in a global context (eg names of specific countries/regions, including reference to specific terminology such as Old World and New World, in relation to viticulture; origin and destination countries for tourism). Relevant statistics were also included.

In weaker responses, candidates misinterpreted the question and confused economic activity with an economic enterprise. Some responses made no reference to the economic activity in a global context.

- (b) In better responses, candidates identified two linkages and explained how each of these related to the economic enterprise. In better responses, candidates answered a variety of locational factors and explained how they had a positive or negative effect on the operation of the economic enterprise.

In weaker responses, candidates did not provide a link between the locational factors identified and the effect on the operation of the economic enterprise.

- (c) In better responses, candidates clearly identified two linkages and explained how each of

these linkages related to the economic enterprise.

In weaker responses, candidates either identified linkages with no reference to the economic enterprise or outlined the nature of the economic activity.

Section III

Question 25

In better responses, candidates clearly identified the spatial and ecological dimensions of two specific ecosystems at risk. In these responses, candidates specified traditional and contemporary management strategies developed and implemented for both of these ecosystems and evaluated the impacts of these management strategies using a range of criteria such as ecological sustainability, effectiveness, cost, aesthetics and longevity. The judgments made in these responses were explicit and supported with evidence. In these better responses, candidates applied accurate geographical terminology and sophisticated concepts in a well-structured and logical manner.

In weaker responses, candidates tended to outline management strategies and described how they are designed and carried out, but without making judgments regarding their effectiveness. In these responses, candidates made a poor choice of ecosystems, eg Antarctica (no traditional management strategies), or used only one ecosystem. In many of these responses, candidates confused traditional strategies with those of early European practices, and made limited use of key geographic terminology and concepts.

Question 26

In better responses, candidates clearly demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of mega cities in the developing world and the challenges of living in a mega city. Candidates made detailed judgements about the effectiveness of specific responses to these challenges. In many responses, candidates made reference to a variety of sample studies/illustrative examples/statistical data and the Stimulus Booklet where appropriate, to support their response. Candidates could choose to focus on one city or a variety of cities.

In weaker responses, candidates confused the term 'developing world' with cities from the developed world. In many responses, candidates outlined the response to the challenge without referring to illustrative examples or simply outlined the challenges.

Question 27

In better responses, candidates demonstrated a detailed knowledge and understanding of their chosen global economic activity and responded effectively to the key word 'analyse' by identifying the appropriate components and drawing out the implications of the impacts of the economic activity. In these responses, candidates gave a balanced analysis of the impacts on the environment, society and the economy, and provided a wide variety of examples. In many responses, candidates made reference to elements of the local case study. In better responses, candidates provided sustained, logical and cohesive responses.

In weaker responses, candidates discussed the enterprise at a local scale rather than the economic activity at a global scale. In these responses, candidates misunderstood which area of the syllabus the question referred to and identified factors which explained the nature of the activity rather than identifying the impacts of the activity on the environment, society and the economy. In many responses, candidates did not analyse, but merely described features of the activity.