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# A-LEVEL GEOGRAPHY

7037/2: Human Geography  
Report on the Examination

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7037  
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## General

This was the second series of 7037/2 and some experience of how to approach the different question types was evident in improved performance across the paper, particularly in respect of questions focusing on AO3. Here students gave suitably more focused analyses, resisting the urge to explain the data. Considerably more students set out a brief plan before the 20 mark essay questions, which frequently resulted in more clearly structured responses.

Students produced a very wide range of performance, and the exam proved accessible to students across the ability range. Whilst stretching and challenging the most able with many students scoring over 100, it also allowed others to demonstrate their skills. Students seemed to manage their time effectively with only very few failing to complete the paper seemingly due to time constraints.

It worth reminding centres that guidance on the assessment objectives can be found in the [‘Notes and Guidance: Assessment Objectives’](#) document produced by AQA.

It was clear that some students were better prepared than others when it came to assessing the AO2 element. Teachers need to ensure that students are familiar with the demands of AO2. Instead of applying their knowledge to the context of the question, some students simply regurgitated specification content around the theme of the question. This constituted AO1 marks only as these answers lacked application of knowledge to the context of the question. Students need to be prepared to use their knowledge understanding of content, concepts and processes. This should then be applied to the context of the applicable 6, 9 and 20 mark questions, rather than a narrative approach of reciting learned materials which some more limited responses showed.

AO3 skills were tested in this examination paper on the first 6 mark question in each unit, for example 1.2, 2.2, 3.5, 4.5 and 5.5. In this series the command ‘analyse’ was used on these questions. The command ‘analyse’ in this context simply required students to interface with the data and deconstruct the information. They needed to look for patterns and trends and analyse the connections both within the figure and between Figures where applicable. Students need to be encouraged to manipulate data rather than simply describing it, as this does not constitute analysis.

It was positive to see that this question type probably saw the biggest improvement from last year, with far fewer students applying their knowledge incorrectly, for example, by offering reasons for patterns, an approach that is not creditworthy.

In the essay questions, students need to be encouraged to address all parts of the question. Students who answer the question fully will generally gain at least level 3, whereas partial responses will score level 2 and very limited responses level 1.

Overall, students frequently performed at a higher level than in the previous year on these 20 mark questions. They were often well-prepared for the demands of these questions and it was very pleasing to note the significant numbers who were able to access level 4, demonstrating both thorough and detailed AO1 knowledge and understanding with a breadth of examples in support. These students made AO2 links to respond in detail to the question. They also had an evaluative conclusion that supported the body of the essay. However, all students must be prepared to deconstruct the questions, identifying the command words and the AO2 links they are required to make, thereby answering the question.

For example, when they are asked to consider relative importance, they should look at what has a bigger role rather than just simply stating the importance without any comparative element. Less effective responses leaned heavily upon subject knowledge and learned place-study detail, without clearly linking such material to the context of the question. These responses were predominantly descriptive and narrative, lacking critical engagement with the theme and demands of the questions.

In Section C, students chose one of three options from question 3 (Contemporary Urban Environments), question 4 (Population and Environment) and question 5 (Resource Security). Question 3 was the most popular option and question 5 the least popular.

## **Question 1: Global Systems and Global Governance**

### **1.1**

Most students had some knowledge of trade agreements and were able to illustrate it with examples. However, many were unable to explain how they are a factor in globalisation, simply stating the link and thereby failing to score maximum marks. Less effective responses considered the role of trade rather than trade agreements.

### **1.2**

Figure 1 was a challenging resource at first glance. However, students engaged very successfully with the resource with a majority accessing level 2. The more effective responses spent time looking at overarching patterns, exemplified them and then looked at examples that didn't follow the pattern. For example, many noted that trade was predominantly with nearest neighbours, the EU countries having most of their trade with each other. Less effective answers focused on the three biggest trade partners, China, USA and Germany, and simply described who trade with whom, without considering patterns or proportions. Pleasingly, very few students attempted to explain the pattern.

### **1.3**

All students made use of Figure 2, though some included detailed analysis of the resource, which is not required in these types of questions. Many students failed to use their own knowledge; students should be reminded that when signalled to do so by the phrase 'using your own knowledge' they need to go beyond the figure and bring in their own examples (if applicable) or development beyond the figure. More effective answers evaluated the progress of some of the goals, perceiving that all showed success even if only three reached their target. They then proceeded to show their own knowledge through linking the goals to the impact on development or evaluation of other UN strategies, such as peacekeeping to give a more informed view.

### **1.4**

Some of the responses to this question were simply outstanding. Students often displayed extensive knowledge of Antarctic NGOs and IGOs and were then able to evaluate their specific success in protecting Antarctica. The most successful answers dealt with all aspects of the question, addressing the command to thoroughly evaluate relative importance in enhancing protection. Some of the better answers also considered that NGOs and IGOs are more successful when they work together and a considered view of the future threats and need for enhanced protection, demonstrating the breadth with which students can tackle these 20 mark questions.

Less effective responses frequently relied on knowledge and understanding of the threats to Antarctica or the strategies used to protect it, without marrying the two together. Others relied heavily on the Antarctic Treaty and failed to consider other strategies. Such responses tended to reflect a lack of understanding of the demands of the question. Some responses referred to specific strategies without identifying them as either NGOs or IGOs and therefore did not address the question successfully.

## **Question 2: Changing Places**

### **2.1**

The vast majority of students understood the concept of exogenous factors. However, many failed to consider the impact these exogenous factors had on the character of a place, thus failing to address all parts of the questions, although this is required even in these shorter responses. More effective responses gained credit for using specific examples to support the points made.

### **2.2**

Many students simply described all three figures without looking for connections between the figures or even within the figure. Centres need to encourage students to engage with a wide variety of data types in preparation for the exam. For example, some students were obviously not familiar with census data at ward level and thought the data referred to a hospital ward. Analysis was frequently very imprecise. Far too many students use phrases such as ‘unemployment is quite a bit higher in Central ward...’. They need to be much more precise and show accurate use of data. Many picked out isolated data points, for example saying that there is a higher percentage of 25-29 year old males without looking at the overall picture showing that there is a higher than average for 20-49 year old males. Analysis is not simple description so there is no credit for simply lifting data without reference to context.

It was very clear that when students were versed in what ‘analysis’ means, they were able to deal with the question effectively. These students scored well by looking at overall trends, making connections between Figures 3a, 3b and 3c and manipulating data effectively in support. For example, many noted that the money was a very frequent response in 3a and this links with 3c as 5% more people are unemployed than the North Somerset average. They then went on to consider that unemployment might be higher due to the bulge of 20-49 year old males in Central ward.

### **2.3**

This question required students to apply their knowledge of the usefulness of qualitative sources in representing places to the song lyrics in figure 4. It clearly differentiated and we saw a variety of interpretations of the song lyrics which were all creditable as long as this was used to suggest how they represented Sheffield. Whilst the vast majority of students were able to assess the usefulness of the song lyrics in generic terms, they were often less confident in relating this to the representation of Sheffield. The question referred to ‘representing a place’ and also ‘sources such as this’ meaning they could also bring in other places or qualitative sources (for example, poems) gaining AO1 credit. Students should be encouraged to read the questions carefully to allow them to fully develop their responses. Very few students brought in other resources such as poems and paintings. Too many students overstated views that all qualitative sources were biased and failed to see the richness of such sources in representing places.

The best responses took lyrics from the song and suggested what they told us about Sheffield, for example picking up on themes such as deindustrialisation and environmental impacts. They integrated other sources such as poems or paintings or even other songs and came to a considered viewpoint on their usefulness in representing place.

## **2.4**

This question clearly differentiated and the full spectrum of responses was seen with over half of students achieving at least Level 3. A wide variety of external forces featured and many responses referred to migration in addition to those listed in the question.

Many responses were outstanding in their quality and it was very pleasing to see the way in which students and teachers have embraced the study of their chosen place. It very much appears that, when students have engaged with primary and/or secondary data either through fieldwork or remotely, they produce much more convincing responses showing a deeper understanding of their place. Some answers are too 'text-book reliant' and rather generalised, lacking in real detail of lived experience. Depth of knowledge of the place was critical to the success of the best responses. Some students chose a place that was far too large to study in depth and therefore found it hard to access higher marks. For example, referring to London as a whole rather than choosing a locality in London - such as Stratford, for example - meant that it was difficult for students to describe the impacts on lived experience with any degree of precision or accuracy.

Nearly all students were able to access the question. A very small minority tried to answer the question using knowledge of TNCs in whole countries, thus failing to engage with the idea of place. Most students were able to describe the impacts of external forces with clarity and precision; the challenge was linking the impacts of external forces to how this changed lived experience. Too many students made generic points at this point for example 'it created unemployment'. More effective responses went on to develop such points, linking unemployment, for example, to specific details regarding wellbeing or social challenges.

Students were given a choice and they should be encouraged to choose wisely. For example, if they did not think there were many external forces impacting on their local place, then it would be better to use the distant place. A significant number of students misread the question and used both places. In such cases the stronger place was credited. This shows the importance of reading the questions carefully.

Students were asked to 'evaluate the role of one or more external forces'. The best answers took a very discursive approach and came to a very explicit evidence-based conclusion. They were often evaluative throughout. Centres are encouraged to practise class discussion and debate to raise the standard of evaluation in these 20 mark questions.

## **Question 3: Contemporary Urban Environments**

### **3.1**

About three-quarters of students identified B as the correct answer. There was no specific pattern in choice of distractor for those who chose incorrectly.

### **3.2**

Under half of students chose the correct answer A.

### 3.3

Over three-quarters of students identified B as the correct answer. Many who got it wrong had apparently failed to see the word 'not' in bold in the question.

### 3.4

Over two-thirds identified B as the correct answer.

### 3.5

The most effective responses on this question looked for the connections between Figures 5a and 5b and then stated whether the Spearman Rank Co-efficient calculation in 5c supported them. These better responses looked at spatial patterns in 5a and 5b as well as the relationship between them. For example, many noted that there was a South-West strip of boroughs radiating out from the centre which had the lowest percentages of low-paid workers. They noted, however, that with the exception of Richmond, they didn't have the highest levels of recycling and in fact Westminster actually had the second lowest rate of recycling in London. They then concluded that this was supported by 5c as you have to accept the null hypothesis.

Some students misinterpreted the Rs calculation and then sought to explain this by looking for connections in 5a and 5b. Whilst they scored credit for seeking connections, these answers often lacked precision and showed only basic analysis. Some students failed to use the Rs calculation at all. Whilst they could not score maximum marks, with clear analysis of Figures 5a and 5b they were still able to achieve level 2.

### 3.6

A full range of responses was seen on this question which discriminated well. Most students were able to access at least level 2 by having some understanding of the concept of SUDs and applying this to the figures. For example, many were able to explain the benefits of Figure 6a linked to 6b. Students who did not make reference to their own knowledge of SUDs schemes found it difficult to access marks beyond low level 2, relying on simplistic links between phrases in 6b and their supposed presence in 6a. The best answers at level 3 were able to evaluate 6a and other SUDs schemes (Lamb Drove was very popular) in relation to some of the phrases in 6b. At times, there was confusion with river restoration projects showing the need to learn key concepts accurately. Whilst students were able to score credit with generic relevant ideas, inappropriate aspects featured frequently in responses.

### 3.7

This cross-specification question proved quite challenging, requiring students to link their knowledge of environmental problems in one urban area to the extent to which globalisation was responsible. Many students simply set out AO1 knowledge of environmental problems in their urban area with only passing reference to globalisation. Some students incorrectly used urban microclimates to exemplify environmental problems. The most commonly used urban areas were London and Mumbai. As with 2.4, many students did not note the 'one' in bold and covered two urban areas.

The most effective responses chose one area and then considered the extent to which globalisation contributed to their environmental problems. In these responses, environmental problems often went beyond air pollution, looking at waste disposal and urban sprawl. These were then linked to effectively to the role played in causing them such as migration, TNCs and transport. These answers frequently incorporated extent by examining the degree to which other factors were responsible, such as government policies. A few students expressed a considered view that globalisation actually reduced environmental problems as it had provided a solution and increased wealth to deal with the problem.

As with other questions on this paper, clearer geographical thinking would have raised students' performances on this question, for example by considering important geographical concepts such as scale and temporal change in their responses.

### **3.8**

Whilst there were some outstanding responses to this question, there were also many less successful responses only accessing level 1 or level 2 credit. Rather than lacking understanding of the concept of suburbanisation, such responses often failed to identify patterns of economic and social wellbeing in their chosen urban areas. In choosing their contrasting urban areas, many students used contrasts in wealth, with London and Mumbai commonly chosen. Contrasts can be seen a variety of ways such as economically, by scale or land-use. Some students used two different areas of a city and this was perfectly legitimate. This often provided a better route as students looked at the contrasts in social and economic wellbeing, linking it to the degree to which suburbanisation was responsible. Selection of urban areas was key, and many students appear to use their changing places case-studies; again, this was often a successful route as they showed very detailed knowledge and applied their understanding of suburbanisation. Students should be encouraged to be synoptic and think about 'what best fits' when answering these 20 mark questions. The question also asked about 'the role played by the process of suburbanisation', so a perfectly legitimate response was to consider that actually suburbanisation played a limited role and that other processes were far more important, as long as this was evidenced based, showing clear understanding.

Less effective responses often confused terminology. For example 'counter-urbanisation' and 'urbanisation' were often explained as 'suburbanisation'. This was particularly the case with case-studies such as Mumbai, where students frequently expressed the view that suburbanisation played a huge role in creating slums as people moved from rural areas to outer edges of urban areas.

Typically effective responses used clear contrasting urban areas and showed specific knowledge of patterns of wellbeing. They then considered the degree to which suburbanisation had caused these, often bringing in other causes such as regeneration coming to an overall evidence-based conclusion. These students frequently went on to score level 4, with many accessing full marks.

## **Question 4: Population and Environment**

### **4.1**

Over 80% of students correctly identified A as the correct answer. Those who chose an incorrect answer most frequently chose B.

### **4.2**

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This question posed few problems and it was pleasing to see that most students were able to use correct classification skills to identify C as the correct answer.

### 4.3

Students struggled to correctly identify C as the correct answer. With a little more thought it was probably possible to arrive at the correct option by process of elimination, depending on knowledge of the demographic transition model.

### 4.4

About two-thirds chose the correct answer, A. Those who chose incorrectly frequently chose B or C.

### 4.5

The most successful responses on this question looked for the connections between Figures 7a and 7b and then stated whether the Spearman Rank Coefficient calculation in 7c supported them. These more effective responses looked at spatial patterns in 7a and changing positions in 7b, as well as the relationship between them. For example, many noted that the highest levels of obesity occur in North America and northern countries of Africa. However, the only countries with levels of obesity over 30% to appear in 7b are the USA and Egypt. Many considered patterns of development, although this is not a clear relationship. 7c suggests that there is a positive correlation and the null hypothesis can be rejected. Some students showed impressive geographical thinking by realising that 7b shows the percentage share of global diabetes rather than the percentage of diabetes in each country. Those students who noted this often went on to produce very clear and concise analysis, scoring full marks. This shows the importance of full engagement with the nature of the data.

Some students misinterpreted the Rs calculation and then sought to explain this by looking for connections in 7a and 7b. Whilst they scored credit for seeking connections, these responses often lacked precision and showed only basic analysis. Some students failed to use the Rs calculation at all. Whilst they could not score maximum marks, with clear analysis of Figures 7a and 7b they were still able to achieve level 2.

### 4.6

This question differentiated well. The biggest discriminator was whether or not students understood the concept of the demographic dividend. When students had a good understanding of this concept, they were able to apply this very successfully to Figures 8a and 8b. The most effective responses considered the extent, noting that whilst Thailand had clearly experienced a demographic dividend this was probably short-lived as GDP had fallen considerably between 2010 and 2015 and 8b suggests that by 2030 Thailand will have an ageing population. However, very few students were able to use their knowledge to demonstrate that achievement of the demographic dividend depends not only on population structure but also the need for the country to offer good employment.

Less effective responses tended to focus on analysis of the data which was not required or featured knowledge of population structure to interpret 8a, for example focusing on life expectancy or birth rate.

#### **4.7**

This cross-specification question proved quite challenging, as did comparable questions 3.7 and 5.7. It required students to link their knowledge of patterns of population change in one country or society to the extent to which globalisation was responsible for the pattern. Many students simply described AO1 knowledge of population change with only passing reference to globalisation. Some tried to fit the reasons for change to globalisation - for example by stating that the 'one child policy' was an example of globalisation. It would have been better for students to have looked at other influences with reference to globalisation as the question requires students to assess the extent of the contribution made by globalisation. Therefore, it would be perfectly legitimate to show why other factors made a larger contribution.

A wide range of countries featured frequently including the UK, China, Japan and Iran. Not surprisingly, the focus tended to be on migratory patterns rather than natural population change.

As with other questions on this paper such as 3.7, clearer geographical thinking would have raised performance on this question, for example by considering important geographical concepts such as scale and temporal change in their responses.

#### **4.8**

This question proved quite challenging with over half of students failing to achieve level 3 and above. Responses indicated the need for students to prepare to make links both within and across the specification and to ensure that they answer all parts of the question.

Many students knew what carrying capacity was and linked population pressure to soil problems. Some drifted into generic responses about the views of Malthus and Boserup, which offered some relevance but failed to address the whole question. Less effective responses often featured explanation and description of soil problems or mitigation strategies only. They also offered little in the way of evidence in support. Students should be encouraged to use specific examples even when not asked for them.

More effective responses linked increasing population pressures with increasing soil problems such as salinisation and waterlogging. These were supported with specific place or soil type examples. They then suggested how these soil problems could be managed by strategies such as hydroponics and irrigation. The most effective responses further considered the extent to which soil problems could be managed given future population pressures. Such responses were clearly supported by an evidence-based conclusion.

### **Question 5 Resource Security**

#### **5.1**

Nearly all students correctly identified B as the right answer, showing that they understood the difference between managing consumption and managing supply.

#### **5.2**

Just over half of the students identified B as the correct answer. The importance of students learning key terms was clear in relation to knowledge focused AO1 questions such as these.

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### 5.3

Less than half of students identified A as the correct answer. Evidently, many struggled to classify the examples as primary and secondary sources of energy.

### 5.4

Three-quarters of students correctly identified C as defining the virtual water trade.

### 5.5

As with 3.5 and 4.5, more effective responses on this question looked for the connections between Figures 9a and 9b and then stated whether the Spearman Rank Co-efficient calculation in 9c supported them. These more effective responses examined the relationship between coal producing countries in 9a and coal consumption in 9b. For example, many noted that China produces more than three times its nearest rival, the USA. It is also the world's largest consumer, consuming nearly five times than the second biggest consumer, India. Responses also noted that eight of the top 10 countries in 9a are in the top 10 consuming countries in 9b. 9c suggests that there is a positive correlation and that the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Some students misinterpreted the Rs calculation and then sought to explain this by looking at anomalies in 9a and 9b. Whilst they scored credit for seeking connections, such responses often lacked precision and featured only basic analysis.

Some students failed to use the Rs calculation at all. Whilst they could not score maximum marks, with clear analysis of Figures 9a and 9b they were still able to achieve level 2.

### 5.6

With a considerable quantity of data to process, students needed to practise data selection skills. There is not an expectation (as with 3.6 and 4.6) that they use all of the data and the key here was to use evidence from 10b and 10c to explain the link between energy supply and physical geography. More effective responses tended to focus on countries which demonstrated the links well, for example Norway and Austria, as this allowed them to link to both relief and precipitation. The most successful responses brought in their own knowledge by referring to Iceland, for example, and the link between plate tectonics and geothermal energy. Assessment was demonstrated by considering countries where the link was not so clear, for example the UK, which uses very little HEP, despite high rainfall and some variation in relief.

Less effective responses frequently relied heavily on description of the figures and broad generalised statements not backed up with evidence.

### 5.7

This cross-specification question proved quite challenging, as did comparable questions 3.7 and 4.7, requiring students to link their knowledge of water conflicts or society to the extent to which globalisation was responsible for the conflict. Many students simply set out their AO1 knowledge of water conflicts with only a passing reference to globalisation. The question required students to assess the extent of the contribution made by globalisation, so it would be perfectly legitimate to show why other factors such as climate change made a larger contribution.

As with other questions on this paper such as 3.7 and 4.7, clearer geographical thinking would have raised performance on this question, for example by considering important geographical concepts such as scale and temporal change in their responses.

## **5.8**

This question differentiated well. Where it was well answered, students used their knowledge of geopolitics to good effect and were able to link it to knowledge of increased energy and/or mineral ore demands and evaluate the extent to which geopolitics will be needed to ensure a sustainable supply. Some very effective responses extended into considering how recycling of metals and/or increasing development of renewable sources may increase a country's self-reliance and reduce its exposure to geopolitical aspects. The most effective responses were also topical, demonstrating independent reading beyond taught content.

Less effective responses tended to only answer parts of the question, for example, only describing the reasons for increasing demand or existing geopolitical involvement. A few students had a very poor understanding of the concept of geopolitics, with some thinking it is synonymous with trade. They also offered little in the way of evidence in support. Students should be encouraged to use specific examples even when not asked for them.

It is important that students plan these 20 mark questions and ensure they identify all parts of the question.

### **Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.