C A R I B B E A N E X A M I N A T I O N S C O U N C I L

REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION MAY/JUNE 2009

GEOGRAPHY

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GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

MAY/JUNE 2009

GENERAL COMMENTS

This year 13 030 candidates were entered for the CSEC Geography examination. One hundred and ninety-nine were entered for the Alternative to the SBA, Paper 3/2.

In general, too many candidates still display a lack of understanding of basic geographical concepts. This is sometimes reflected in their interpretation of and response to the questions.

In Paper 2, map reading, a critical aspect of Geography, continues to be a challenge to the majority of candidates. Most candidates also have great difficulty in the questions that require descriptions and interpretations.

Responses to questions relating to weather and climate were generally unsatisfactory. Many candidates avoid these questions and those who attempt them often display many deficiencies in their knowledge.

In Papers 03/1 and 03/2 many candidates display an inability to conduct appropriate field research and to write reports on that research. This is especially true of those who write Paper 03/2.

Some other areas of concern include the following:

- Maps and diagrams are often badly drawn, untidy and inaccurate. Conventions for drawing maps and diagrams are often ignored.
- Most candidates cannot produce a moderately accurate drawing of their country.
- Poor language skills.
- Many ignore the instructions given in the questions.
- Lack of adequate and meaningful elaborations of answers. Many can identify, name and list factors, but often do not earn full marks because of lack of appropriate elaboration and explanation.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01

This paper comprised sixty multiple-choice questions. The performance on the sixty multiple-choice items on Paper 01 produced a mean mark of 36 out of 60, and scores ranged from 0 to 57.

Paper 02

Question 1 (Compulsory)

This question was not well done. Approximately 60 per cent of the candidates scored below 10 marks.

Parts (a), (b), (c) and (d) were well done, with between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of the candidates earning full marks.

However, the following should be noted:

- When measuring distances, candidates should follow the instructions and give answers in the unit requested.
- Some candidates need more help in using the linear scale and the protractor.
- A number of candidates reversed eastings and northings when giving grid references.

Part (e) required candidates to use the key to the map and was generally well done. However, some did not understand the concept of a man-made feature while others seemed not to know how to use the key to a map.

Part (f), requiring candidates to describe a major relief feature in a given grid square, was poorly done. Many candidates did not understand the concept of 'relief feature'. As a result, many described vegetation and roads. Quite a number described everything in the grid square instead of the major relief feature.

A good answer should have mentioned the narrow, steep-sided ridge cut by a saddle. Marks would have been earned for identifying the feature and giving any appropriate elaboration. Elaboration could have included size or height of feature, position, orientation or steepness.

In Part (g) approximately half of the candidates were unable to complete the simple grid correctly. Students need more practice in drawing and interpreting cross-sections.

Part (h) required candidates to describe land use in a given area of the map. While approximately 75 per cent correctly identified at least one land use, too many were only able to give one type. Many were also unable to give adequate descriptions of the land use types they identified.

Part (i) asked candidates to give reasons for the land use pattern identified in Part (h). This was not well done as few gave acceptable reasons. A good answer would have included making a connection between farming, steepness of slope, presence of water, and access to markets.

It is evident that much more emphasis must be placed on the teaching of map reading and developing the relevant skills. It is recommended that mapwork be integrated with the other topics on the syllabus and that it be done consistently.

Question 2

This question tested knowledge of Objectives 3, 4 and 5 of the Natural Systems section of the syllabus. While it was the most popular question in this section, the answers were only moderate in their accuracy.

Generally, responses to Part (a) were satisfactory. Weaker candidates were unable to draw and label the main features of a subduction zone.

In Part (b) (i), many candidates did not adequately distinguish between intrusive and extrusive volcanic features. While many were able to identify one intrusive feature, too many were unable to name an extrusive feature. In Part (b) (ii) many were unable to describe how intrusive landforms could influence the landscape over time.

Part (c) (i) was generally well done and many were able to explain how earthquakes develop at transform plate margins. Parts (c) (ii) and Part (c) (iii) were not well done, as many candidates were unable to account for the formation of fold mountains where continental plates collide, and could not explain how lava plateaux are formed. Many suggested that a lava plateau was formed by 'expansion' and erosion of intrusive features.

Question 3

Approximately 28 per cent of all candidates attempted this question. The answers were generally satisfactory.

In Part (a), most candidates were able to score at least 75 per cent of the marks available. It was clear, however, that not much attention was given to proper drawing and labelling of the diagram.

Part (b) (i) required candidates to outline the sequence of processes which occur in the water cycle. Most were familiar with the information needed to answer the question, but many failed to gain full marks because of incorrect sequencing of the processes in the cycle. Better candidates used diagrams effectively to help in their answers.

In Part (b) (ii), most candidates were able to identify the characteristics of limestone that made it susceptible to chemical weathering (chemical composition and permeability) but many did not adequately elaborate.

For Part (c) (i), many candidates demonstrated knowledge of some facts relating to the formation of limestone pillars but some did not know the sequence of steps in the process. Some confused pillars with sea stacks.

Parts (c) (ii) and (iii) asked candidates to explain how swallow holes and limestone caves were formed respectively. While some demonstrated some knowledge of the features, many confused them with coastal features (sea caves and blow holes).

Question 4

This question tested knowledge and understanding of aspects of weather, climate and vegetation.

Of the small percentage of students who attempted it, about 30 per cent gave satisfactory responses.

Responses to Part (a) were generally satisfactory. Most interpreted the graph correctly and gave appropriate responses.

The response to Part (b) (i) was generally fair. However, many gave characteristics of Tropical Continental climates rather than Equatorial. Many responses were also vague and thus did not earn full marks. It is not sufficient to state that the temperature is 'high'. Greater elaboration/description is required.

In Part (ii) many confused the characteristics of the vegetation of Tropical Continental regions with that of Equatorial regions.

Part (c) was not very well done. Many candidates confused convectional rainfall with relief rainfall in Part (i) and some wrote about the ITCZ and frontal rainfall. Too many were unfamiliar with the correct concepts to give adequate responses to Parts (ii) and (iii). Surprisingly many even interpreted 'windward' and 'leeward' side incorrectly.

Question 5

This question tested candidates' ability to interpret a population pyramid and to display their knowledge of population distribution, density and growth of capital cities in the Caribbean. It was a popular question but the answers were barely adequate.

Part (a) was generally well done.

Part (b) (i) was poorly done because many candidates were unable to define population density and distribution.

Many candidates did not earn full marks in Part (b) (ii) because they were unable to state sufficient consequences of migration on the Caribbean region.

Part (c) (i) was fairly well done. The question required an explanation of how relief may lead to low population densities. However, many candidates interpreted relief to be relief rainfall while most only discussed highland areas.

While Part (c) (ii) was generally well done, some candidates did not adequately explain how the given factors influence population distribution.

Part (d) was fairly well done. It should be noted that while most candidates recognized that migration contributed to population growth in cities, only a few noted the importance of natural increase.

Question 6

The following areas were tested in this question: economic activities in the Caribbean, strategies for encouraging visitor arrivals (except sun, sea and sand), reasons for development of tertiary activities in the region and the role of CSME in addressing some of the challenges to development in the Caribbean. Many of the responses were weak.

Most candidates were able to calculate the angles in Part (a) (i) and complete the pie chart in Part (a) (ii).

Responses to Part (b) (i) were satisfactory, as most had a good understanding of primary and tertiary industries. In Part (b) (ii), many candidates were unable to identify ways in which visitor arrivals could be encouraged other than the promotion of culture. Expected answers included: development of ecotourism, health tourism, heritage tourism, promotion of festivals and special events, promotions in non-traditional markets and developing cruise tourism.

Part (c) (i) was poorly done, as many seemed to see tourism as the only tertiary activity. In Part (c) (ii) it was clear that many more candidates were familiar with the garment industry than with the food industry. Part (c) (iii) was poorly done as many candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with the role of the CSME.

Question 7

Most of the responses to this question on agriculture were inadequate.

Part (a) required candidates to read information from a table and was well done.

Part (b) (i) was generally well done also, as most were able to state ways in which agriculture was important to the region.

Many were unable to identify significant characteristics of large-scale commercial arable farming in the Caribbean and thus Part (b) (ii) was not well done.

Part (c) called for an account of the similarities and differences between large-scale commercial arable farming in the Caribbean and that of the Canadian Prairies using the headings ‘growing season’ and ‘marketing’. This was poorly done and in many cases there was no answer at all. Many answers were inadequate because candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of the concepts ‘growing season’ and ‘marketing’.

Question 8

This question tested the following objectives: Section 1- 2.1, and Section 4 – 1, 2 and 3.

In Part (a) of the question, most candidates earned at least half of the available marks. Most were able to identify a number of the changes shown in the photographs.

Part (b) (i) presented some difficulty, as many candidates were unable to adequately define the term 'natural hazard'. In Part (b) (ii), although candidates were able to identify the impact of the hazard, they did not elaborate on their points and link them to economic development.

In Part (c), candidates gave a variety of responses, many of which did not focus on a household disaster plan. Weaker candidates simply gave a list of foodstuffs to be bought. However, the better candidates focused on those actions that should be taken to ensure members of the household experience the least stress during this event and they gave reasons. Their list of items included determining escape routes, locating the nearest shelter, obtaining insurance, stocking non-perishable foods, water, medication, battery operated radios and flashlights.

Question 9

This question tested Section 1 - 3.4, and Section 4 – 4, 8 and 9.

Part (a) required the drawing of a map of a Caribbean country selected by the candidate to show an area where marine pollution was a problem and the source of that pollution. While a few produced excellent maps which observed the conventions related to drawing maps, most produced poorly drawn, untidy and unlabelled maps. Many could not draw maps of their own country. In some cases candidates drew parts of the country rather than the entire country.

Part (b) was fairly well done although some candidates needed to give more attention to defining what was required as opposed to things that are related or merely giving examples.

Part (c) was fairly well done.

Question 10

This question tested Section 1 – 3.3 and Section 4 – 5, 7 and 10.

It was a very unpopular question, and was attempted by only approximately 10% of the candidates writing the examination.

While Part (a) was generally fairly well done, many had difficulty calculating time where the International Date Line was involved.

Parts (b) and Part (c) were fairly well done.

In Parts (d) and Part (e) many candidates were able to identify measures to reduce deforestation and coral reef destruction. However, weaker candidates were unable to or did not elaborate and explain fully.

Paper 3/1 – (School Based Assessment)

The overall performance of candidates was fair. However there were weaknesses in the following areas:

- Aims of the studies
- Presentation of maps
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

Table of Contents

Many candidates did not number the pages in the text as indicated in the Table of Contents.

Aim of Study

In too many cases the aims of the study were not clearly stated. In addition they were often not specific enough or did not allow for field work. In some instances the data collected did not bear much relationship to the aims of the study. Many aims were not 'geographical'.

The following is an example of a good aim seen this year:

- To identify, describe and account for the features of erosion and deposition along the coastline from Alleynes Bay to Batts Rock Bay.

Examples of poorly written aims included the following:

- What are the effects of global warming on (name of city)?
- To find out if there has been an increase or decrease of dengue fever cases in (name of town).
- To examine the effects of tourism on (name of country).

Location of Study Area

Most candidates presented good maps of the territory/country showing the study area. However, the maps of the site were often presented on the same scale as the territorial map and did not show details of the area. Some were presented as larger scale maps of the territory/country or district, without showing details of the study area.

Where computer generated maps are used, these should be manipulated to remove unnecessary detail and to clearly include/highlight the study area and other salient features. They MUST also include all the elements of a good map. Photocopied maps are not acceptable.

Methodology

Most candidates performed creditably in this area. However, there were too many instances where questionnaires were used even though they were not appropriate for the particular studies.

Presentation of Data

Illustrations should be integrated into the discussion/account. They should be neat, titled and numbered and references should be made to them where appropriate in the discussion. Maps, apart from those used to show location, may also be used as illustrations.

Quality of Data

This is not a section for candidates to include in their studies (i.e. there should not be a sub-heading in the reports called 'quality of data'). Candidates are marked on the quality of the data as it relates to achieving the aims of the study. The data should be relevant and sufficient for the achievement of the aims of the study. There should not be an over-dependence on the use of secondary data.

Analysis and Discussion

There were some good studies that were well developed and coherent. These used primary data that were appropriately illustrated and integrated in the discussion of the findings. In too many cases candidates merely wrote theoretical accounts based on textbook descriptions/explanations, with no reference to the phenomena studied in the field. There must be clear evidence that fieldwork has been done.

Conclusion

This should be a summary of the findings discussed in the presentation and analysis. It should be related to the aims of the study and new data should not be used in this section.

Communication of Information

While some improvement was seen in the quality of language and in the use of relevant geographical terms, there were still too many instances of poor grammar, spelling and expression.

Bibliography

Many candidates scored no marks on this section. Candidates should follow the conventions for writing a bibliography. Special attention should be given to the convention for listing of internet sources.

PAPER 3/2 -- (Alternative to School Based Assessment)

Question 1

This question tested candidates' ability to transfer a part of a map to a given grid. A 1:25,000 map of part of Trinidad was used and the grid was drawn at a scale of 1:50,000. Most experienced difficulty in locating/inserting the features accurately on the grid. In addition, many were unable to insert the 500 ft contour line and label land over 500 ft. A large number of candidates did not use a key.

Question 2

Question 2 tested candidates' ability to frame a research question or hypothesis. The responses were poor, as most were unable to write a suitable research question. For the scenario given, a suitable answer might have been that "discharge of a stream increases evenly downstream." This could also have been rephrased as a question.

Question 3

Part (a) which tested candidates' knowledge of stream discharge, was poorly done. While some were able to identify one feature related to stream discharge, most were unable to identify three as required. Possible answers would have included the following: width of channel, depth, shape, and velocity.

In Part (b), most candidates' could not explain how they would collect data. Often the methodology proposed was inappropriate. The majority of those who were able to identify suitable methods were unable to describe them adequately.

In Part (c), only a few candidates' were able to identify a problem that may be encountered in conducting the research. In many cases those who identified a problem could not explain how it could be overcome.

Question 4

Part (a) of this question required candidates to draw the shape of a stream channel using data and a grid provided. While some were able to accurately plot the points along the section, most inverted the channel shape. Labeling was mostly either non-existent or inadequate. Many ignored the instruction regarding the scale to be used.

Part (b) was not well done. Most candidates could not describe the characteristics of the channel using the information given in a table.

The majority of candidates could not calculate the cross-sectional area of the channel as required for Part (c). Many candidates attempted to calculate the gradient instead.

Question 5

Part (a) of this question required the drawing of a bar graph to illustrate given data. This part was fairly well done and most candidates labelled the axes correctly. Some ignored the instruction to use a given scale.

Most were able to identify the pie chart as another method by which the data could be illustrated and thus Part (b) was generally well done.

Part (c) required candidates to summarise and comment on data on changes in land use given in a table. Generally they were able to list the changes but some were unable to make adequate comments.

Question 6

The ability to write up a bibliography in an accepted format was tested in Question 6. Most candidates were unable to do this correctly. In many instances candidates wrote sentences or short paragraphs. Most did not follow the conventions for writing a bibliography.