

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2010

**GEOGRAPHY
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

**Copyright © 2010 Caribbean Examinations Council
St Michael, Barbados
All rights reserved.**

GENERAL COMMENTS

This year 13,546 candidates were entered for the CSEC Geography examination. For the Alternative to the School-Based Assessment (SBA) (Paper 03/2), 290 candidates were entered. The most popular questions were 2 and 5 and the least popular were 4, 6 and 7.

Map reading, the compulsory question and a critical aspect of Geography, continues to be unsatisfactory. Most candidates were able to earn some of the Profile marks but had great difficulty with questions that required descriptions and interpretations.

Responses to questions relating to weather, climate, vegetation, rivers and drainage patterns, volcanoes and plate tectonics were generally unsatisfactory. Many candidates avoided these questions and of those who attempted them a large number displayed many deficiencies in their knowledge.

In general, too many candidates still display a lack of understanding of basic geographical concepts. This is sometimes reflected in their interpretation and response to questions. In Papers 03/1 and 03/2, many candidates displayed an inability to conduct appropriate field research and to write reports on that research. This was especially true of those who wrote Paper 03/2.

Some other areas of concern include the following:

- Maps and diagrams were often badly drawn, untidy and inaccurate. Conventions for drawing maps and diagrams were often ignored.
- Poor language skills.
- Many candidates ignored the instructions given in the questions.
- Lack of adequate and meaningful elaboration of answers. Many candidates could identify, name and list factors, phenomena but often did not earn full marks because of a lack of appropriate elaboration and explanation.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Paper 01 – Multiple Choice

This paper comprised 60 multiple-choice questions. Performance on Paper 01 produced a mean mark of 353 out of 60, and scores ranged from 7 to 59.

Paper 02 – Essay Questions

Section A – Map work

Question 1

In this question, over 50 per cent of candidates obtained scores between 12 and 17 marks, out of a possible 28 marks.

Part (a) was well done with over 90 per cent of candidates giving the correct grid reference. Common errors made included the following:

- Placing northings before eastings
- Inserting commas, decimal points and letters between the easting and northing
- Giving a four figure reference instead of a six-figure grid reference

In Part (b), candidates were tested on their ability to give a compass direction, over 90 per cent of them were able to give the correct answer. While Part (c) was generally quite well done, a few candidates gave compass directions instead of the bearing.

Part (d), which required candidates to measure a distance on the map, was well done. Some candidates used the wrong unit of measurement while a few had difficulty interpreting the instruction to give the answer 'to the nearest 100 meters'.

Part (e) required candidates to calculate a gradient. Many candidates did not attempt this question and most of those who attempted it did not know or understand the formula. Many candidates lost marks as they failed to express their answer as a ratio. Additionally, approximately ten per cent of candidates did not show calculations and so could not earn full marks.

The expected answer was:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{gradient} &= \frac{\text{difference in height}}{\text{horizontal distance}} \quad \text{OR} \quad \frac{\text{rise}}{\text{run}} \\ &= \frac{1350 - 0 \text{ ft}}{1815 \text{ ft}} &= \frac{1350^1}{1815_{1.34}} &= \frac{1}{1.34} \\ &= 1:1.3 \end{aligned}$$

Part (f), which required candidates to list four services provided in the village of Berekua, was well done. The vast majority of candidates was able to identify the services.

In Part (g), candidates were required to describe the drainage in a specified area of the map. A large number of candidates failed to use map evidence in their descriptions and merely gave textbook definitions of drainage features. Many candidates confined their answers to drainage patterns only and made no mention of other aspects of drainage such as direction of the flow of rivers, how well drained the area is, source etc.

For Part (h), most candidates were unable to describe the site of the town of Pointe Michel. Many of them gave lengthy descriptions of the town without focusing on the site. Many wrote about roads, settlement patterns and services. A good answer should have included mention of the fact that *the town is built on gently sloping land along the coast, that it is bordered to the north and south by steep sided upland areas and that most of the town lies between two river valleys.*

Part (i) was poorly done. Many candidates gave descriptions of the natural vegetation instead of agriculture as required by the question.

It is recommended that much more time be spent on the teaching of map reading and developing the relevant skills in map reading should be integrated with the other topics on the syllabus.

Section B – Natural Systems

Question 2

This question tested knowledge of Objectives 1, 2, 4, 11 and 13 of the Natural Systems section of the syllabus. Generally, responses to Part (a) were satisfactory with most candidates scoring three out of a possible four marks. Weaker candidates did not follow the instructions and were unable to see the relationship between the distribution of volcanoes and plate boundaries.

In Part (b) (i), the diagram required to illustrate a trellis drainage pattern was poorly done. Many candidates also did not support the diagram with a written description or annotation. Some of the more common mistakes included the following: confusing trellis with dendritic, referring to distributaries instead of tributaries, and claiming that the direction of flow of the tributaries was from the main river. Many candidates did not mention the influence of the geology of the area.

The description of the ways in which rivers transport their load required for Part (b) (ii) was generally well done. However, some candidates wrote about erosional processes while some wrote about wave processes.

In Part (c) (i) which required candidates to explain how volcanoes are formed at convergent plate boundaries, many candidates mixed up continental and oceanic plates and did not know which plate would sink. Part (c) (ii) also revealed many misunderstandings with regard to the formation of fold mountains at plate boundaries. Many candidates were also unable to give correct examples.

Question 3

This question tested Objectives 9, 11, and 12 in the Natural Systems section of the syllabus. Part (a) was generally well done and most candidates scored three or more marks out of four. Part (b) required candidates to describe four processes of coastal erosion. Many candidates wrote about river erosion or could not give adequate descriptions.

In Part (c) (i), candidates were asked to explain how bay-head beaches form. Many candidates knew how bays were formed but did not address the question of bay-head beaches.

In Part (c) (ii), the explanations for the formation of river cliffs and slip-off slopes were often vague and incorrect. River cliffs were often confused with sea cliffs and waterfalls, while slip-off slopes were confused with beaches or levees.

Question 4

This question tested knowledge and understanding of aspects of weather, climate and vegetation. It was generally poorly done with an average mark of less than 8 out of a total of 24. Part (a) required the drawing of a cross section of a hurricane. Many candidates did not know how to draw a cross section and drew the symbol for the eye of the hurricane or isobars. Part (b) required a description of the layers in a tropical rainforest. This part was poorly done as many candidates could not adequately describe the vegetation in each layer or mixed up the layers.

Part (c), requiring candidates to explain how a rain shadow area developed, was fairly well done. However, some candidates had no idea of the meaning of the term 'rain shadow'. Some drew diagrams of clouds blocking the sun or buildings covered by clouds. Responses to Part (d) were generally poor. Most candidates could not explain why temperature on the summit of a mountain is lower than temperature in the lowlands.

Section C – Human Systems

Question 5

This question tested Objectives 2, 5 and 6 in the Human Systems section of the syllabus. It was extremely popular, based on the frequency of responses. Candidates generally performed fairly well and showed a basic knowledge of the concepts tested.

Part (a) was generally well done except for Part (a) (iii) which involved the calculation of population growth. This was not attempted by a large number of candidates and when it was attempted there were clear computational errors.

Part (b) was fairly well done. However, some candidates confused problems of urbanization with reasons for migration and some mixed up rural with urban. Some did not explain concepts fully, especially the concept of over population.

For Part (c) candidates displayed limited knowledge of the factors influencing population growth and gave limited or incorrect responses. In Part (d), candidates seemed to have a good grasp of the causes of urbanization but the points raised were often not well developed.

Question 6

This question tested Objective 4.2 in section one of the syllabus and 9, 11, 13, and 14 in the Human Systems section. Many of the responses were weak.

Part (a) was generally well done and most candidates were able to score at least 3 out of 4 marks. In Part (b) (i), candidates often gave examples of types of economic activities in the Caribbean but did not link the example to the type of activity.

Responses to Part (b) (ii) were often inadequate because many candidates did not properly elaborate on the factors which influenced the location of the chosen activity. In Part (b) (iii), many candidates were able to identify challenges to the chosen economic activity but did not adequately elaborate on these challenges.

Part (c) was poorly done as many candidates did not satisfactorily compare the given factors for the two countries. The influence of raw material was not addressed appropriately by the majority of candidates. In many instances, candidates focused on only one country.

Question 7

Few candidates attempted this question which examined the farming systems in the Caribbean and the Prairies of Canada. The average mark achieved was approximately 11.

Part (a) was not well answered with many candidates not being able to interpret the data from the table. In Part (b), candidates were able to identify characteristics of peasant farming, however, the weaker candidates were unable to develop their points.

Part (c) asked candidates to explain the changing role of commercial arable farming. There was limited development with regard to the named country and many answers were very general, showing a lack of knowledge and understanding of current trends.

In Part (d), where candidates were asked to explain the differences between farming in the Caribbean and the Prairies of Canada, there was little attempt to develop a comparison. Many candidates showed a lack of knowledge about farming in the Prairies.

Section D – Human: Environment Systems

Question 8

This question examined responses to hazards at various levels (individual or the community, national and regional). It was a popular question and the average mark was approximately 12 out of 24.

Part (a) was well done. Only a minority of candidates failed to recognize the hazard shown as an earthquake. Part (b) was also well done. Candidates displayed a good knowledge of hazards that affect the Caribbean and how individuals and communities respond to these. A few candidates wrote about national responses rather than individual or community responses.

In Part (c) (ii), many candidates failed to give responses at the national level. For Part (c) (ii), many candidates wrote generally about responses and often confused 'regional' with 'national' and sometimes 'international' responses. There was some evidence of knowledge of regional organizations such as Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Unit.

Question 9

This question tested Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 in section one of the syllabus and 4, 5, 7 and 9 of the Human - Environment Systems section.

Part (a) (i) and (ii) were well done but in Part (iii) many candidates had difficulty in accurately completing the bar graph. Part (b) (i) was well done as most candidates were familiar with the terms 'air' and 'land pollution'. Part (b) (ii) was poorly done. Many candidates did not clearly describe the measures taken by Caribbean countries to reduce the emission of aerosols. In Part (c), there were many good responses. Candidates were generally able to explain how deforestation affected the environment.

Question 10

This question tested Objective 9 in the Human - Environment Systems section of the syllabus. It was not a very popular question and the average mark earned was approximately 15 out of 24.

In Part (a), many candidates did not fully shade the areas of both islands that would have been flooded. For Part (b), many candidates confused global warming with ozone depletion and in several instances the ozone hole was given as the cause of global warming.

Candidates performed well on Part (c) which required them to explain how coral reefs in the Caribbean are destroyed. The weaker candidates, however, were only able to list the causes.

PAPER 03/1 – School-Based Assessment

Generally, topics chosen were related to the syllabus. Some teachers were too lenient and gave marks for maps which were not properly drawn. In most cases, studies were within the word limit. Studies should be presented with the required documents such as strategy sheets and individual mark sheets for each candidate.

Table of Contents

In some cases, pages were either incorrectly numbered or not numbered at all. This section could have been better presented.

Aim of Study

Some aims were not clearly stated and students need to be guided in choosing aims that are directly related to the syllabus. Aims should be geographical and should allow for collection of data in the field by the students. Proper field studies cannot be executed if aims are weak.

Location of Study

In some cases, study areas were not identified and named on the territorial maps. The necessary elements such as the title, key and scale were absent from some of the maps and many were not drawn to scale. Site maps were not accurately drawn. In some cases, they were not labelled and the study area was not highlighted in relation to surrounding important man-made and natural features. Maps should be drawn preferably using black ink. Computer-generated maps should not have unnecessary details and should be manipulated to make them suitable for the particular study being done.

Methodology

This section was satisfactorily done, but some candidates did not describe how the data was collected. Candidates should note that not all studies require the use of questionnaires and if they are used, they should be presented in the SBA.

Some candidates did not write the name of the study site and the territory to show where the study was done.

Presentation of Data

Many illustrations were not properly presented. Illustrations should be thoroughly labelled and have suitable titles. Some illustrations and graphs were not suitable for the data being presented and lacked accuracy. Illustrations, photographs and graphs should be integrated within the analysis and discussion.

Quality of Data

Data collected was often not adequate enough to achieve the aims of the study. Some candidates presented only secondary data. Some of the studies were not comprehensive enough to achieve the aims.

Analysis and Discussion

Very often, the analysis did not relate to the aims. Some points were not well developed, sequenced or supported by comprehensive primary data. Illustrations were often not fully integrated in the discussions.

Conclusion

Some conclusions did not relate to the aims and methodology and did not provide an appropriate summary of the findings discussed in the analysis. In some cases, new information was added.

Communication of Information

Candidates extensively used geographical terms associated with the study. There were, however, too many instances of grammatical and spelling errors and poor sentence construction.

Bibliography

Candidates were expected to write correctly at least one textbook used for the study. These should be in alphabetical order by surname and not presented in a listing format under headings such as textbook, atlas and website. It is recommended that an acceptable style such as the APA be used.

PAPER 03/2 – Alternative to School-Based Assessment

Question 1

This question tested candidates' ability to transfer a part of a map to a given grid. While some good responses were given, many candidates were unable to accurately locate and insert the features.

Question 2

Question 2 tested candidates' ability to frame a research question or hypothesis on farming practices. The responses were poor as some candidates were unable to formulate a clear and suitable research question or hypothesis. For the scenario given, a suitable answer might have been that "*farming practices have changed over the last five years because of new international marketing arrangements.*" This could also have been rephrased as a question.

Question 3

Part (a) required candidates to list six items (excluding the size and position of the estate) on which they would collect information about farming practices. This was generally poorly done. Items which could have been included in the list include: *type of labour (full or part time, family or outside, machinery, crops (acreage, yield, main markets)), land use pattern, reasons for land use pattern, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides used, farming year/harvest times, costs and subsidies.*

In Part (b), most candidates were able to say when they would collect the data but could not describe how it would be collected. Often, the methodology proposed was inappropriate. Suitable answers could have included the following: *contact owner/manager to schedule a visit at his/her convenience, preparation of a large-scale base map for use in the field, interview the owner/manager (preparation of interview schedule), tour the estate to observe and record farming practices etc.*

Part (c) required candidates to identify one problem (excluding weather, illness and injury, they may encounter in conducting the research and to state how they would overcome that problem. Only a few candidates were able to identify a problem and in many cases those who identified a problem could not explain how it could be overcome.

Question 4

Part (a) required candidates to draw the cross section of a stream channel using data in a table and a grid provided. This was fairly well done as many candidates were able to accurately plot the points and draw the cross section.

Part (b) was not well done. A large number of candidates failed to suggest reasons for the differences in the shape of the channel shown by the measurements given.

Question 5

Part (a) (i) required the calculation of the average velocity of a stream from data given in a table. Most candidates were unable to calculate the average velocity. Part (a) (ii) asked for reasons for differences in velocity with depth. There were also many incorrect responses to this part.

In Part (b), candidates were required to draw a line graph to illustrate data in a given table showing stream velocity with depth. While there were some good responses to this question, a number of candidates ignored the instructions and drew bar graphs instead.

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.