CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

CAPE® CARIBBEAN STUDIES

Subject Report

May-June 2025

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

MAY-JUNE 2025

CARIBBEAN STUDIES

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean Studies examination comprised four papers as outlined below.

- Paper 01 — Multiple Choice
- Paper 02 — Essay
- Paper 031 — School-Based Assessment
- Paper 032 — Alternative to School-Based Assessment

These four papers assessed candidates' knowledge, understanding and competence in the following modules.

- Module 1 — Caribbean Society and Culture
- Module 2 — Issues in Caribbean Development
- Module 3 — Investigating Issues in the Caribbean

There was a decrease in the number of candidates registered to sit the 2025 CAPE Caribbean Studies examinations. This year (2025), there were 9822 candidates registered when compared with 10486 in 2024 and 9963 in 2023.

There was an approximate 8 per cent decrease in the number of candidates earning Grade I; approximately 16 per cent of candidates were awarded Grade I in 2025 when compared with 24 per cent in 2024 and 18 per cent in 2023. However, the percentage of candidates earning Grades I–V was 96 per cent in 2025 which is similar when compared with that of 2024 and 2023.

At the module level, there was a slight increase in performance in Module 1; approximately 77 per cent of candidates were awarded Grades A–C when compared with 74 per cent in 2024 and 70 per cent in 2023. Performance in Module 2 showed a slight decrease in 2025; approximately 58 per cent achieved Grades A–C when compared with 62 per cent in 2024 and 55 per cent in 2023. Performance in Module 3 showed a significant decline. For this module, only 62 per cent of candidates achieved Grades A–C in 2025 when compared with 69 per cent in 2024 and 76 per cent in 2023.

This report has been put together using candidate responses to the 2025 May-June examination in CAPE Caribbean Studies Paper 02. The report reflects the original design of the examination paper which assesses Modules 1 and 2.

PAPER 01 – MULTIPLE CHOICE

Paper 01 consisted of 45 multiple-choice questions. Out of a score that was weighted up to 80, the mean score on the paper was 56.50, which is approximately 71 per cent.

Paper 02 consisted of four sections, each with one compulsory essay-type question. The first two questions were marked out of 20 while the last two were marked out of 30. These 30-mark questions required more detailed, analytical discussions as opposed to the more descriptive nature of the responses expected from the first two questions. The mean on this paper was 55.69 out of 100 compared with 57.14 in 2024. The highest score achieved was 97.

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Section A: Module 1 Question 1 – Caribbean Society and Culture

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While many candidates seemingly understood the process of hybridization, many were unable to show how the process challenged the plural society theory. Candidates devoted significant effort explaining the history/evolution of the process without showing how the features or characteristics of the process pushed back against the "we mix but we do not combine" tenet of the Plural Society theory.

Candidates were expected to display an understanding of the main argument of hybridization and put forward arguments that challenge the concept *we mix but we do not combine*. It was expected that candidates would have known that the phrase was used by British sociologist J.S. Furnivall to explain his Plural Society theory in which he argued that different ethnic and cultural groups brought together under colonial settings lived and worked alongside each other but maintained separate social structures, cultural practices and institutions. In their discussions, candidates should have also noted that Furnivall examined the theory within the Caribbean context while taking into account the impact of modernization, and he therefore asserted that integration occurred, but in a limited form. Against this backdrop, candidates could have then noted that some theorists argue that all societies are plural societies while others claim that the Caribbean region itself challenges the notion of a plural society due to various instances of integration. Then, examples could have been incorporated from any of the six categories under which cultural and racial integration has occurred In the Caribbean — religion, music, festivals, racial hybridization, language and food — to challenge Furnivall and Smith's theoretical position.

Realities that challenge the theory include the following.

Religion
- The racial diversity evident within many of the religious bodies across the region reflects a strong degree of racial and cultural integration.
- The conversion to or adoption of religious practices of an ethnic group by someone belonging to another ethnicity is also a clear indicator of cultural integration that challenges the notion that "we mix but we do not combine".
- The celebration of religious public holidays by a significant number of people who do not adhere to the religion being recognized is also a marker of cultural integration.

Music
- Various indigenous forms of music in the Caribbean have been birthed because of the merger of lyrics and rhythms from the various migratory groups that arrived in the region. These include ska, reggae, calypso, soca, zouk and chutney.
- In many instances, musicians cross ethnic and racial barriers to further engulf themselves in the art form, further contributing to cultural integration that challenges the Plural Society theory. One example of this is the creation of soca music which involves the merger of Indian and African cultural elements.
- Musical collaborations and 'sampling' is another example of cultural hybridization in music.

Race
- Historically, Caribbean people have always engaged in relationships and miscegenation that have created racially hybridized children across all races and time periods. Examples are
    - the racially hybridized children or mestizos who were birthed as male Spanish settlers engaged in sexual relationships with indigenous women in the various islands on which they settled
    - the interracial group known as mulatto or coloured population that came through mostly forced relationships between European men and women of African descent who were largely part of the enslaved population.
    - the Garifuna peoples found in St Vincent and several parts of Central America, including Belize and Honduras; these came about as a result of the settlement of ship-wrecked or escaped West Africans on the island of St Vincent circa 1635.
    - the Chinese and Indian who came through the indentured immigration schemes launched by the British and French to combat the alleged shortage of labour; miscegenation with the already present African and European descended population led to several racially hybridized offsprings — Indo-Chinese, Afro-Chinese and the 'dougla'.

Festivals
- People of different cultures and races coming together to plan, execute and indulge in various secular and religious festivals
- Inter-island migration occurring because of cultural and racial integration.
- Carnival — an example of hybridization — is a religious festival that was introduced to the region by French immigrants; now, different racial, ethnic and cultural groups participate in the festival.

Language
- Most islands have a syncretic blend of languages that are referred to as creole languages (dominant European languages combined with African, Indian and Chinese). These represent the mixing of the various groups and the need to have a common means of communication.
- The enslaved peoples arrived in the region as multilinguists speaking a group of languages from the Niger-Congo region of Africa. This added tremendously to the number of African words and phrases that are components of the various languages of the region.

Food

- A variety of spices, fruits, vegetables, herbs and starches were brought to the region by the various immigrant groups. For example, the Africans brought oxtail and cow foot; the British brought pudding and tea; the Indians brought various spices including curry; and the Chinese brought wontons and chow mein. These foods combined with the local cuisine of the indigenous peoples to give the region a wide blend of dishes that integrate ingredients from various parts of the world.
- There are many instances of food stores and restaurants opening to cook and sell food that originates from a homeland or ethnicity separate from the local community.

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Section B: Module 2 Question 2 – Issues in Caribbean Development
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The tradition of underperformance on this question continues whereby candidates seem not to know enough about the economic/trade/finance concepts. Most candidates presented only general information on how the region conducted its foreign relations. In addition, there was confusion between CARICOM and CARIFORUM.

Responding well to the question required that candidates have the knowledge that partnership agreements between the European Union (EU) have been in existence from as early as 1976 with the signing of the Lome Convention between the European Economic Community (EEC) — which was the forerunner to the EU — and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP). This agreement ended in 2005 when it was challenged at the World Trade Organization (WTO) by some non-ACP countries and multinational corporations. In an effort to find other agreements that would mutually benefit the EU and Caribbean countries, both parties settled on an EPA in 2008. Candidates could then have discussed any of the following advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages
- Based on agreements such as the EPA, consumers benefit from larger variety and cheaper goods and services.
- Trade through such agreements contribute to the development of countries and good trade deals over time sustain such development.
- Poverty reduction can be achieved through job creation in cultural industries.

Disadvantages
- Technology Transfer: Historically, agriculture was one of the sectors that benefitted most from preferential treatment under agreements with the EEC/EU such as the Lome Convention and the Cotonou agreement. However, an increasing use of technology in agriculture by farmers in developed countries has outpaced Caribbean farmers due to the cost of these technologies. It is not only cost that limits access to some of these technologies but also, because the technologies are developed in areas such as the USA, which is outside the scope of the EU/CARIFORUM EPA, this makes the farming technologies even more expensive for Third Countries like those of the Caribbean. In addition, with artificial intelligence (AI) introduced into the equation, AI robots will replace fickle, unpredictable, expensive farm labour. Caribbean farmers will be uncompetitive in this technological farming environment given other externalities such as global warming, susceptibility to storms and hurricanes and by virtue of being small island developing states (SIDS).
- Shared profit and losses by each partner to the agreement irrespective of the size of the economy can be deleterious to the countries of the region's economies.
- In free trade agreements, reciprocity does not favour Caribbean countries because though their economies are smaller, they must give the same access to MNCs from EU countries. Even when the countries of CARIFORUM trade as an aggregate entity, they are still not able to benefit from reciprocity.
- Caribbean countries are called SIDS due to their small geographical size and susceptibility to external shocks. These small land masses limit the amount of output from these countries. This is a huge disadvantage

Caribbean countries face under the EPA in terms of economies of scale that will make their products uncompetitive to benefit from the EPA.

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Section C: Module 1 Question 3 – Caribbean Society and Culture

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Candidates performed best on this question when compared with the other questions. They wrote extensively on the family types and how each contributed to the fight against poverty. However, a significant number of candidates were only able to describe the family types and then they shifted the focus from family types to the government and its role in combatting poverty.

Based on the two family structures they selected, candidates were expected to first define the family structures and then identify and discuss two ways in which each of the two structures create opportunities for the family to combat poverty and achieve economic progress in the Caribbean. Discussion could have included some of the following points.

Extended Family Structure
- This is basically a structure that forms a broader network which incorporates multiple generations — aunts, uncles, cousins and other relatives who all live in the same household or in close proximity.
- This type of structure helps combat poverty in the Caribbean because family members can share the workload or the financial responsibilities of childcare and elderly care, making the cost of children's daycare and elderly care centres affordable for low-income households.
- The extended family structure also creates an economic alternative for parents who need time away from parenting so they can either work or participate in leisure activities.
- Extended family households, more popular amongst Indian and Chinese households, tend to have multiple incomes which allows for the family to combat poverty by pooling their monies. They share living expenses such as housing, utilities, groceries, education and healthcare among multiple family members, reducing the individual financial burden. This allows for greater financial stability and increased purchasing power for essential needs, easing the strain of the increasing cost of living in the region and helping families combat poverty.
- In the extended family structure, generational wealth is possible through inheritance, family businesses and wealth preservation strategies within the extended family where assets can be preserved and transferred across generations to combat poverty. This may include jointly owned properties and other financial investments and business interests.
- A factor that could curtail the fight against poverty in the extended family structure is the death of the matriarch or patriarch. This could put the family at risk of having higher levels of conflict and violence.

Nuclear Family Structure
- The nuclear family is a social unit consisting of two parents, typically a mother and a father, and their biological or adopted children, residing together in the same household.
- In this structure of fewer members, poverty can be fought because it would be easier to manage finances, allocate resources, and make financial decisions more efficiently in comparison to larger extended families where there may be more financially dependent members like the elderly.
- Members of the nuclear family have more flexibility for career mobility, relocation, and pursuing job opportunities without being limited by extended family obligations or considerations.
- In cases where nuclear families have two incomes, more resources (tuition, extracurricular activities and educational materials) can be allocated toward children's education, so the children experience a higher standard of living (one above a life of poverty).
- A factor that could negatively impact the fight against poverty is that if there is no balance, the emphasis placed on increasing wealth in nuclear families can lead other family members being ignored. In some cases, this includes mothers and fathers.

Visiting Family Structure
- The visiting family structure refers to a family arrangement where relatives or family members maintain strong connections, engage in frequent visits and sustain close relationships despite living in separate households or geographic locations.
- One scenario where this plays out is where a family member, most often a male, resides abroad and engage in the transfer of remittances.
- In romantic relationships, visiting family structures enable women to exercise more independence in job choices. They also share resources such as tools, equipment, and household items, reducing the need for individual purchases and promoting resource efficiency which helps to combat poverty.
- There are cases where family members who reside abroad have more timely access to information about job and business opportunities in their environment; they can then encourage other family members to migrate and secure these opportunities.
- Visiting family members may also engage in informal networking which can open opportunities for family members to move from socially depressed areas to middle class working communities due to the social, financial or business partnerships in which they are engaged.
- One negative point is that visiting family structures often suffer from conflicts concerning paternity, trust and instability.

Single-parent Family Structure
- The single-parent family structure is a household arrangement where one parent assumes the primary responsibility for raising and caring for one or more children without the presence or active involvement of a co-parent or partner.
- Being the sole decision-maker, a single parent can be flexible when it comes to employment and work schedules, working around childcare needs and family responsibilities. This empowers the parent to combat poverty.

- Single parents in the Caribbean often have access to various government financial aid programs, scholarships, or support networks specifically designed to assist single-parent households in the fight against poverty.
- Single parents can focus resources directly on the needs of the children (education, extracurricular activities, and healthcare) without dividing resources among multiple family members. They tend to make more sacrifices for their children to escape the cycle of poverty. (Oscar Lewis)
- The negative effect this family structure sometimes has on the socialization of the child can be noted here, as children in such family settings are more susceptible to crime, deviance and teenage pregnancy. The single income nature of single parent family structures also provides limited opportunities for the creation of generational wealth.

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Section D: Module 2 Question 4 – Issues in Caribbean Development
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The candidates performed fairly well in the question, by demonstrating knowledge of social justice. However, many of them discussed the question within the context of development and regional integration rather than focusing on the challenges faced in trying to achieve social justice.

Candidates were expected to clearly discuss four ways in which social justice is challenged in contemporary Caribbean society. Clear arguments and examples surrounding any four of the following points could have been used — inequality, poverty, corruption, political polarization, traditional values and attitudes. It was expected that discussion would show how these factors can work against social justice.

Inequality
- The overarching point regarding inequality could be that any area of inequality negatively affects social justice and prevents the average citizen from experiencing self-actualization and personal and familial development.
- There are inequalities in educational opportunities with limited access to secondary and tertiary education for children of the poor and under-class. This leads to inequalities in income distribution which keeps one section of the population struggling to stay above the poverty line. Then, all types of social malady such as petty as well as serious crime, violence and scamming occur.
- As an extension to the inequalities in income distribution, we can have the lower income group seeking to achieve social mobility by hard work but their share of the national income in some Caribbean countries remaining less than 10 per cent while the capitalists and propertied class share 90 per cent among themselves. This they can do because of the low wages paid to workers who are the most exploited group within the labour process. This constant and pervasive inequality affects how social justice is carried out in the society.

Poverty
- Poverty is not just being unable to afford basic items for daily living, it leads to the individual and sometimes family or community being unable to develop the capability to have potable water, send their children to school, have at least one meal per day and afford or have access to certain types of medication. Then, when government cannot guarantee these capabilities to all sections of the population, social justice is denied to those people.
- Poverty leads to a feeling of inferiority when there is lack of access to basic amenities and resources; and the quality of daily life is drastically reduced so that social inequalities become glaring.
- Poverty affects individual health, as being unable to afford prescription medication can impair one's health status.
- Poverty results in the lower income of the population having bigger families due to many social reasons such as lack of education on sexual and reproductive health. Large family sizes are also an accommodation and response to the socio-economic conditions of being constantly poor.

- The poor can have diminished human resources quality which leads to them being denied the social justice of acquiring proper jobs to help them out of poverty. The job situation for those living in poverty does not provide them with adequate income that can stretch beyond their basic physiological needs.

Corruption
- Huge amounts of public and private resources are lost to corrupt practices. The World Bank has noted that more than 50 per cent of money allocated to projects in some Caribbean islands are lost to corrupt practices related to procurement, contract over-runs, theft, cost over-runs that are unaccounted for, and many other fraudulent conducts, robbing the poor of having access to social justice since governments are then forced to cut certain social services that benefit the poor.

Political polarization
- As it relates to democratic systems of government and political parties, political polarization can be defined as the divergence or movement away from a centralized, unbiased governance to a sectionalized one with two or more specialized groups or political parties.
- Political polarization can have a devastating effect on a country's economic growth as it drives away genuine local and foreign investors. This bipolarity in some Caribbean countries has resulted in corruption, violence and crime being a constant feature of the political culture and so works against social justice being meted out to the population.
- Some countries in the Caribbean have unique informal governance structures due to the polarization of political systems into two main parties. Each party seeks to maintain power by creating certain political enclaves that always vote one way and are not allowed to do otherwise. This affects social justice as it limits the frequency with which members of those enclaves can discuss politics with non-like-minded others or have other freedoms of expression. How people are treated by the parties in these communities shows a lack of social justice in how resources and amenities are allocated to these communities. Human capital is lost in these communities due to violence, rape and extortion, and government and civil society seems incapable of administering social justice in these communities.

Traditional values and attitudes
- Contemporary society has seen declining values relating to the socializing culture of the society, not necessarily that culture is changing from bad to worse but it is changing in ways that devalue social justice for some members of the population.
- How children and the elderly are treated has changed in contemporary society compared to traditional society. The social justice of this group is compromised by the changing values of the population. Loss of respect and increasing violence against this group is on the increase in devastating and egregious ways. Government and civil society must try to protect the most vulnerable if social justice is to prevail.
- Attitudes (settled ways people within a community think or act) are also on the decline, as society sees more individualism by members of the community. Despite codified laws, the attitude of some individuals infringes on other people's social justice. Money and power create a bad duality that influences the behaviour and attitude of some individuals. Social justice is really challenged by these changing values and attitudes.

- There is an increase of toxic masculinity as men challenge, sometimes physically, the progress made by women in occupying higher level positions in organizations, while at the same time the marginalization of men at tertiary institutions is on the increase. Social justice must protect our women and other vulnerable groups in society.

Recommendations

- Candidates must learn how to answer questions. Often, words such as *describe* and *discuss* are ignored and candidates simply write what they know. The 20-mark questions are descriptive essays while the 30-mark questions must be more detailed, showing both sides in a discussion.

- Candidates need to place additional focus on economic related concepts, as well as being able to apply their knowledge to better understand and answer questions.