UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
SEC LEVEL

GEOGRAPHY
MAY 2013

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

Part 1: Statistical Information

Table 1: Distribution of candidates' grades for Sec Geography May 2013

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	16	26	38	19	19			12	3	133
PAPER B				19	21	13	10	22	11	96
TOTAL	16	26	38	38	40	13	10	34	14	229
% OF TOTAL	7.0	11.4	16.6	16.6	17.5	5.7	4.4	14.8	6.1	100.0

MODERATION OF FIELDWORK REPORTS:

Each candidate needed to present two fieldwork reports by following the rules indicated by the official SEC syllabus 2013. Each report carried 10 marks out of the total of 200 marks assigned for the entire examination.

Examiners moderated over 100 fieldwork reports on visits to the specific schools as assigned to them by MatSec.

The moderators reported that, generally, there was a very good performance by the majority of the candidates and the teachers' assessment was satisfactory. The choice by the candidates of the sites, where to perform the study, was excellent as candidates gathered more practical and first-hand geographical knowledge about the Maltese Islands, besides learning new skills. This is a clear indication that candidates are being prepared well and that the reports are being integrated well with the themes being taught in class.

However, there were, some evident weaknesses in a small number of reports: some evidence of downloading of texts from websites without acknowledging, the odd ones of purely descriptive presentations and some weak attempts to investigate the site without defined objectives. It is also important to mention that for such studies, candidates need to identify a research question from the start. Moreover, more analytical work is expected from the data collected. The conclusion of the reports, then, should also be developed better, especially by making personal suggestions about what can be done on the site.

In one school, candidates presented only report each and not two as requested by the syllabus

SEC GEOGRAPHY 2013 Report
Description of questions, responses and results
Paper 1

Candidates had to answer ALL questions in this examination paper.

Question 1

Re: Map extract showing Mellieħa, Bajda and Wardija Ridges in NW part of Malta

(a) Most of the candidates answered correctly to the six-figure grid reference sites indicated, showing that the skill of sub-dividing a square into ten was well mastered. There were few exceptions with the Eastings not written down before the Northings.

(b) Practically all answers to giving the compass direction of various features from a named point were correct, even though the answer required more attention than one of the four main cardinal points.

(c) Estimating the length of road indicated was generally well answered but a number of candidates did not provide a correct unit of measurement.

(d)   This part of the question posed the greatest problem with about one-third of candidates finding difficulties in writing four sentences describing the topography over which the marked road passes over.

Question 2
Re: Location of features on the World Map

(a)   Most of the answers identified the location of the four descriptors mentioned in the question but did not provide the name of the location.
(b)   Practically all candidates answered correctly.
(c)   The general problem with this part was that the candidates gave answers that indicated other plates than the ones requested.
(d)   The movement of the tectonic plates was well explained and some students provided interesting sketches in the limited space available.
(e)   Most of the rivers' names were given correctly.

Question 3
Re: The development of karst landforms

(a)   This question dealt with karst landforms. Most of the candidates gave credible answers to the factors that influence the development of karst landforms.
(c)   Difficulties in how joints turn into grykes and giving the name to the flat-topped blocks between grykes posed problems with a number of candidates leaving out one or both questions.

Question 4
Re: Causes and control of flooding

(a)   Most of the answers given were correct and showed that candidates were familiar with the causes of flooding.
(b)   The answers to three possible flood control measures were also to the point.

Question 5
Re: The weather conditions in an atmospheric depression

(a),(b) and (c)   Different levels of answers were given. The problem identified was with actually in describing in three lines the type of weather that occurs at the different points indicated in the diagram.

Question 6
Re: Settlement site and situation

(a)   Candidates were well prepared to define settlement site and settlement situation.
(b)   Most of the answers to this question were correct and most students were correct in listing the four factors that affect location of settlements.

Question 7
Re: Population growth and decline rates

(a)   Different levels of candidates were identifiable from the answers to this question in that quite a number could hardly interpret the bar graph displayed in Figure 5, whilst the better candidates gave elaborate answers as much as the space provided permitted.

(b)   Most of the answers to this question were correct however, a small number of candidates provided only two instead of three reasons.

Question 8
Re: Multinational or transnational corporations

(a)   and (b) Most of the answers given were correct, and it was clear that most candidates knew exactly what was type of answer to present.

Question 9
Re: Types of farming in Brazil

(a)   and (b) Surprisingly quite a number of incorrect answers were given and the main reason was probably a lack of preparation by a number of candidates and that the two questions asked were very much linked together. However, a lack of correct answers to Figure 6 was evident among a block section of the candidates.

(c)   Candidates fared better in answering this part on sustainability of a particular farming practice.

Question 10
Re: Biomass or biogas fuel

(a)   The question on biomass/biogas fuel confused candidates in that a number found it difficult to define it.

(b)   and (c) However in describing two advantages and mentioning two negative impacts candidates obtained better marks.

Paper 2A office Numbers 1-133

Paper 2A was composed of 2 sections. The candidates had to answer two questions from each section. Section A was composed of Questions 1 to 4 and Section B was composed of Questions 5 to 8. Each question had a total of 25 marks. Out of the 133 candidates, six were absent. Consequently, 127 candidates sat for the exam. In one instance, one candidate answered only two questions out of four.

Section A

Question 1:
Re: Soils and soil profiles.

A diagram of the soil horizons was provided and candidates were asked to describe the layers and the horizons found in a soil profile. The second part of the question required an explanation of five terms used in pedology that influence the formation of soils.

Forty-six percent (61 candidates) of the candidates answered question 1. The average mark was 15 out of 25. At times candidates did not use the appropriate technical terms when answering section (a), such as, leaching, capillary action or regolith. With regards to section (b) the answers were not always exhaustive. The term 'topography or relief' was at times confused with 'climate'.

Question 2:
Re: The seasons and movement of the Earth around the sun.

The question was composed of part (a) which required a labelled diagram and an explanation of the movement of the Earth and part (b) which required an explanation of what causes a change in the season and examples that support the answer.

Question 2 was answered by 68 per cent of the candidates (90 candidates). The average mark was 13 out of 25. In most answers the diagram was not complete particularly candidates forgot to include the direction of the movement of Earth around the sun. Two key words that were supposed to be included in the answer to section (a) and section (b), revolution and tilt, respectively were at times not mentioned. When answering section (a) there were instances when candidates only drew the diagram and did not explain the movement of the Earth around the sun.

Question 3:
Re: Erosion processes in the coastal zone.

This question was in 2 parts. In part (a) the candidates were to describe four main erosion processes that operate on the coastal zone. In part (b) the candidates were to explain a list of coastal conditions that determine the rate of coastal erosion.

Fifty-five per cent of the candidates (73 candidates) answered this question. The average mark was 14 out of 25. Overall, the candidates knew the four main erosion processes. However, there were instances where these were confused with glacial processes and inappropriate terms were used. In addition, when answering part (a) some candidates did not know the four main erosion processes and instead thought that the erosion processes were the headland, cave, stack and stump. When answering part (b) numbers (ii) and (iii) confused the candidates. Some candidates did not know what a 'wave-cut platform' was and therefore were not able to determine the rate of coastal erosion associated with this formation. The technical term 'refraction' was never used for the wave movement that is associated with a sheltered bay and instead 'longshore drift' was used.

Question 4:
Re: Hot desert land formations.

The question was divided in two parts. Part (a) referred specifically to water as an agent that leads to particular physical formations in deserts. Part (b) required three hot desert features that were formed by wind and/or water. A sketch and a description were required for each feature.

Thirty-one per cent of the candidates (41 candidates) answered this question. The average mark was 11 out of 25. When answering part (a) candidates at times did not read the question properly and provided examples related to the force of wind, not water, as was required. When drawing sketches in part (b) these left much to be desired. Descriptions of the hot desert features were at times poor.

Section B
Question 5:
Re: Challenges posed by changing population.

This question was divided in three parts. Part (a) required a definition of 'overpopulation'. Part (b) required four challenges posed by changing population structures around the world and part (c) required the candidates to mention and describe four measures adopted by China to control population growth.

Question 5 was answered by 78 per cent of the candidates (103 candidates). The average mark was 13 out of 25. Several candidates confused the term 'overpopulation' with 'population density'. Most candidates found it quite difficult to identify challenges and with regards to part (c) at times, the measures were repeated using different words.

Question 6:
Re: Urban models.

It was composed of three parts. Part (a) required the candidates to study the diagram of Burgess' and Hoyt's models and to describe the five zones of both models. Part (b) required the candidates to describe five factors that explain the different functions and land uses found in the two models. Part (c) asked for five problems encountered by cities in the developed world.

Question 6 was answered by 60 per cent of the candidates (80 candidates). The average mark was 14 out of 25. When answering part (a) the candidates did not specify the parts of the models that they were describing. At times, however, the candidates re-drew the models and labelled them indicating the different concentric circles and sectors. Overall, a distinction between Burgess and Hoyt was seldom made when answering part (a). It seems that the term 'factors' confused the candidates when answering part (b) since this was rarely answered correctly. Most candidates answered part (c) correctly, however, there were instances where the candidates did not take note that they were specifically asked for the developed world and not the developing world.

Question 7:
Re: Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs).

This question had four parts. Part (a) asked for four reasons why NICs were successful in establishing strong economies, part (b) required a list of five countries that can be considered as NICs on the Pacific Rim. On the other hand, part (c) listed three countries that were NICs and asked for three reasons why economic miracles happened. The last part asked for three reasons why European countries are finding it difficult to keep up with the competition that is being provided by NICs.

Question 7 was answered by 34 per cent of the candidates (45 candidates). The average mark was 14 out of 25. When answering part (b) the candidates used the same list as provided on the examination paper in part (c). In addition, at times, countries in Europe were listed or else cities and not countries were provided.

Question 8:
Re: Trading Blocs.

This question was divided into three parts. Part (a) required a definition to the term 'trading bloc'. Part (b) asked for two benefits and two problems that derive from further enlargement of trading blocs and part (c) required the candidates to describe three instances where Southern European countries and Northern African countries could benefit from each other.

Question 8 was answered by 28 per cent of the candidates (37 candidates). The average mark was 16 out of 25. Overall, there were no issues regarding the answers that were provided.

Paper 2B Office Numbers 5001-5096

Paper 2B was composed of 2 sections. The candidates had to answer two questions from each section. Section A was composed of Questions 1 to 4 and Section B was composed of Questions 5 to 8. Each question had a total of 25 marks. This report provides an overview of the questions and comments based on the answers provided by candidates having office numbers 5001 to 5096, hence a total of 96 candidates. 12 were absent. Consequently, 84 candidates sat for the exam.

Section A

Question 1:
41 (49%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: Rock formation and types.

This question was about coastal erosion and features. Some of the candidates simply described Figure 1 on the examination paper and did not define the terms as requested. Many candidates were able to explain how sedimentary rock turns into metamorphic but many were not able to describe how igneous rocks become sedimentary.

Question 2:
54 (64%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: Coastal erosion and coastal features formed by this force.

Most candidates did well in describing the term and provide an example. However, in explaining how specific landforms develop, many were satisfactory in describing the formation of headlands, bays, caves and stacks but not so well in explaining how cliffs and wave-cut platforms develop. Then many of the labelled diagrams provided as requested were rather rough and many not very clear.

Question 3:
47 (56%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: A diagram representing a cross-section of the Earth and about the plate tectonics forces related to it.

Generally, the candidates who opted for this question, did quite well. However, many were inexact in naming the Earth's sections and more so in the description of each, as they were in the definition of plate tectonics. The majority, then, did better in the description of some effects of plate tectonics.

Question 4:
16 (19%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: The force of the wind and the formation of physical features in hot deserts.

This question was not popular at all. This topic is within the current syllabus but it is not covered well in the textbook usually used in Secondary schools. Most of the candidates were not able to distinguish between features formed by erosion and those formed by deposition.

Section B

Question 5:
76 (90%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: Types of population migration and its effects.

Certainly, influenced by current news regarding the problem of migration into Europe, the question resulted to be preferred by the great majority of the candidates. Most of the candidates did very well and provided much detail to denote the difference between voluntary and forced migration. The majority chose the case of Malta as an example of forced migration from Libya and of course concentrated on the rebellion or civil war, which for months tormented that country.

Question 6:
26 (31%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: The different types of settlement shapes and associated challenges.

Most of the candidates did well and gained most of the marks. Some, however, thought that Valletta is an example of a linear settlement, mixing up the architectural grid pattern of Malta' capital with the overall shape of a linear settlement along a main road (or canals and rivers, in other countries).

Question 7:
14 (17%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: The sectors of economic activity and changes

This was another unpopular question. The sectors of the economy are surely well-known by geography classes. However, candidates are usually rather weak in providing details in case studies related to specific sectors, even though these case studies are very prominent in the current syllabus.

Question 8:
43 (51%) candidates attempted this question.
Re: Emergency and long-term aid to developing countries

Most of the candidates gave correct answers: many referred to abrupt natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods as causing an emergency call for aid but few referred to progressive causes of famine in specific areas and endemic warfare sometimes in the same areas with natural climatic disasters.

Chairman

2013 Examination Panel.