

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

SEC SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

GEOGRAPHY

May 2007

EXAMINERS' REPORT*

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS' BOARD**

***[NOTE: The following is a summary of the examiners' full report.
The original can be consulted at the Matsec Office.]**

SEC GEOGRAPHY
May 2007 Session
Examiners' Report

For this session, there were a total of 195 candidates for Paper A and 143 candidates for Paper B. There were 7 absentees in Paper I and IIA, while in Paper B there were 23 absentees. Fourteen projects (7%) were not presented by Paper A students whilst fifty-three projects (37%) were not presented by students applying for Paper B. Two students on the other hand submitted their project but reported absent in the Paper B sessions.

The percentage distribution of grades for this year's examinations is shown in Table 1 below. Tables 2a and 2b show the percentage distribution per grade per paper type.

Table 1: Distribution of grades for SEC Geography – May 2007 session

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Abs	Total
I+IIA	23	61	56	26	12	–	–	10	7	195
I+IIB	–	–	–	17	28	21	16	38	23	143
Total	23	61	56	43	40	21	16	48	30	338
%	6.80	18.05	16.57	12.72	11.83	6.21	4.73	14.20	8.88	100.00

Table 2: Percentage distribution of grades for Paper I & IIA and Paper I & IIB

Paper I & II A	
Grade	% of Candidates
1	11.8
2	31.3
3	28.7
4	13.3
5	6.2
U	5.1
Absent	3.6

Paper I & II B	
Grade	% of Candidates
4	11.9
5	19.6
6	14.7
7	11.2
U	26.6
Absent	16.1

Tables 3 and 4 represent the percentage response for each question in each paper. The percentage is worked out considering the number of scripts received, therefore excluding the absentees.

Table 3: Paper A – percentage response

Paper I			Paper II		
Question Number	Actual Number of Candidates	Percentage (%)	Question Number	Actual Number of Candidates	Percentage (%)
1	188	100	1	172	92
2	188	100	2	45	24
3	89	47	3	80	43
4	44	23	4	121	65
5	34	18	5	101	54
6	127	68	6	21	11
7	17	9	7	87	47
8	69	37	8	91	49
			9	5	3
			10	36	19

Table 4: Paper B – percentage response

Paper I			Paper II		
Question Number	Actual Number of Candidates	Percentage (%)	Question Number	Actual Number of Candidates	Percentage (%)
1	118	100	1	74	64
2	118	100	2	87	75
3	56	47	3	82	71
4	27	23	4	20	17
5	45	38	5	29	25
6	45	38	6	52	45
7	3	3	7	35	30
8	45	38	8	18	16
			9	25	22
			10	37	32

The response, shown in Tables 3 and 4 above clearly demonstrates a distribution of answers with few questions getting a small number of responses. These include Question 9 in Paper IIA and Question 7 in Paper I. There is also an evident preference for Question 1 in Paper IIA with 92% of candidates attempting the answer. Otherwise, in Paper IIA there is a good distribution of questions answered.

In Paper IIB questions 2, 3 and 1 were the most selected. The least selected questions were 4 and 8 with 17% and 16%, respectively. The selection of the questions by the candidates was quite varied, as Table 4 clearly shows.

The response of candidates, focusing on one particular subject, example for Question 1 in Paper IIA could also mean that the candidates feel they know a lot about one particular aspect. However the overall distribution is indicative of a well designed paper. This, the Board feels, is an improvement both of the content of the examination paper and the preparation of the candidates sitting for the MATSEC examination.

However, the Board is very disappointed to see many candidates applying for the Paper B who do not present their fieldwork and do not sit for the examinations. This year there was the largest number of absentees for Paper B ever recorded.

The next section is divided into three, each dealing with an in-depth analysis of the questions for each individual paper, with general remarks on the responses given by the candidates.

Paper I

Question 1: Answers to this compulsory question varied with good responses to parts (a) and (b) where candidates had to provide the heights above sea level for two marked sites and the grid reference another two sites. However, overall responses to estimates of the built up area of two localities shown on the map and estimates to the marked length of coastline were poor. A number of candidates do not seem to have an idea of the scale of the numerical values provided by themselves. Of particular note is the overall failure by candidates to provide a description of the geographical advantages asked for in part (e). As this part of the question is practically set in all examination papers at this level, it is strongly recommended that candidates are prepared to describe literary that which is presented in a map in plan.

Question 2: Answers to part (a) and part (c) of the question were excellent. In fact most candidates obtained full marks for part (a) and good marks for giving reasons for the changes in the climate and how these are affecting environmental hazards. Answers in part (b) were rather weak with the only consistently correct answer given in the identification of the locality where acid rain occurs mostly. It is suggested that a better grasp of global environmental issues is encouraged.

Question 3: A question that was divided into three parts.

For part (a) answers were largely correct. However where in part (b) candidates were asked to interpret a straight forward diagram, answers were overall pleasant to read with many missing out on the cohesiveness of clay particles. In part (c) dealing with soil erosion most candidates provided good answers.

Question 4: Candidates opting to answer this question provided good answers although answers to part (b) where detailed explanations were requested poor answers were given. In some of the poorer answers candidates failed to distinguish climatic zone and type of vegetation.

Question 5: An easy question on urban heat islands. The question included a figure which students had to interpret. It was evident that interpretation skills were rather poor.

Question 6: Many answers were sufficiently correct and quite a number included excellent sketches to accompany the answers. Candidates provided precise answers about plate boundaries and the formations associated with them.

Question 7: Very few candidates opted to select this question. However those that did attempt to answer it provided excellent and well-labelled sketches including an attempt to represent the karst processes in a figurative way. Most candidates obtained above-average marks for their answers to this question.

Question 8: This was another question that included a figure and the interpretation of a weather chart. Overall answers were rather good with the influence of the Atlantic Ocean on the Mediterranean climate proving to a surprisingly tricky question.

Paper IIA

Question 1 – Renewable Energy: examples, location, methods, advantages and disadvantages

This was the most popular question in this paper. In fact, 172 candidates attempted this question. Many answers were rather good but it was evident that some of the locations indicated were the result of mere guesswork and in some cases difficult to confirm with certainty, especially for the frequent use of wind energy in particular countries. Some candidates seem to have learned that nuclear energy is a renewable source of energy and some others mix up the risk in the use of this energy with the consequences of an actual nuclear bomb explosion.

Question 2 – Settlements: site and situation: particular reasons for site; types of settlements

Only 45 candidates opted for this question. Some confused site with situation and many found it difficult to explain the term 'situation' in connection with settlements. There was a number of candidates who for the establishment of settlements provided an explanation referring to the **growth** of settlements and therefore instead of referring to the original historical and geographical factors, focussed on the more recent effects of rural depopulation, the development of CBDs and the effects of the growing needs for services in towns and cities. For types of settlements, many candidates were unable to refer to loose-knit settlements and planned villages or towns.

Question 3 – Types of Population pyramids and their interpretation as regards countries to which they refer and quality of life

A total of 80 candidates attempted this question; therefore an average response in quantity. Many did well in their responses but some were not even able to show which side of the pyramid indicates the females and which the males. The great majority were able to distinguish between the three types of pyramids presented and even describe the characteristics of a country with a stationary population pyramid. However, many failed to describe correctly the characteristics of a country with an expansive population.

Question 4 – Pollution: types and origin; affected countries or regions; measures to reduce it

The 121 candidates who opted to attempt this question show the high level of educational coverage which the topic is being given. Many gained good marks for their responses but there is still a consistent minority which still confuses the problem of global warming and the thinning of the ozone layer and the specific gases involved in both phenomena. Many candidates went beyond indicating the common place examples of air, sea and land pollution and referred also to visual, light and noise pollution and this shows a growing awareness also in these important environmental areas.

Question 5 – The changing structure of employment by sector in selected countries; reasons behind these changes

One hundred and one candidates chose this question. Most candidates indicated that they knew the meaning and characteristics of the different sectors of the economy (primary, secondary, and tertiary) and some even referred correctly to the growth of the quaternary sector in some countries. But some candidates were in many cases very superficial: with reference to the tertiary sectors many seem to think that it is only tourism which provides employment in this sector; some others are of the idea that services consist only of non-market ones (as teachers and

doctors) but rarely referred to market related ones (e.g. delivery of goods, financial transactions, retail and wholesale, port works). Many just described the sector very very briefly and provided two or three examples. For the decline of agriculture, some candidates referred to environmental degradation as the very cause of this decline in employment in this sector but many others explained correctly the effects of rural depopulation, the expansion of urbanisation and rural and urban mechanisation. For the last part of the question, where candidates had to distinguish between the developed and developing countries, the great majority gained most of the marks.

Question 6 – The structure of an Italian city: different particular sectors; reasons and associated problems

Only 21 opted for this question. Perhaps candidates are not very acquainted with the (unseen) city structure model provided in support for this question in comparison with those (seen) models provided in many texts utilised in schools. The question was however straightforward and very clear. However, the few who attempted this question, for the reasons why the industrial districts and the stadium are located away from the residential areas, provided very oversimplified answers, mostly referring to crimes, noise disturbance and traffic congestions. For the second part, that is the problem faced by the Centro Storico, many candidates took this as the CBD whatever the case maybe and described it as such, ignoring references to cultural tourism and focusing mostly on the use of shopping outlets and banks.

Question 7 – Deforestation: location causes and measures to control it

This question was attempted by 87 candidates. Most of the candidates did well in their answers especially in the description of the term and even when they came to a wider explanation of how deforestation occurs in different areas of the globe. However, the great majority simply referred to such problems arising in the Rainforest zones of South America and made little reference to the forest destruction of the Taiga, of the Asian tropical forests or of the Coniferous ones of North America. Many candidates seem also not able to distinguish between the use of hardwoods and softwoods and hence, when they come to measures to prevent deforestation, tended to mix up issues in the right use of the type of wood for a particular product, whether being paper, furniture, boats or buildings, as the case may be.

Question 8 – Vehicle ownership in Malta: changes in the modal split. Measures to control negative developments

A question which referred to the Maltese environment and perhaps as a consequence 91 candidates opted for it. It is commonplace in such cases that Maltese candidates, instead of concentrating on what they have studied and were taught formally at school, tend to speak from their own experiences from what they observe and see, in this case with reference to the use of vehicles in Malta and the dilemma between private and public transport. The majority referred directly to the bargraph provided, as they were requested to do and the answers were very positive, although very terse indeed and in many cases very superficial. As regards the measures which the Government ought to introduce to reduce the impact of increased car ownership, many candidates suggested many idealistic proposals and indeed in some case very radical e.g. one family one car; some suggested the re-introduction of the train; a hefty increase in licenses and fines; increase in the driving age and of course the introduction of more park and ride services.

Question 9 – A Historical and geographical overview of urban development in Malta and factors which brought about certain changes after 1970

Practically all candidates ignored this question and in fact only 5 candidates opted for it. Although referring to the Maltese context, this question requested candidates to relate urban development in Malta with history and with geography. Perhaps this was considered a very tall order or most candidates perhaps simply failed to understand the question. Even the few who chose to attempt it, for the first part of the question, failed to express correctly what was requested of them. However for the second part, the candidates did well in explaining the sudden increase in dwellings after 1970 (as indicated from the matrix)

Question 10 – Factors influencing global tourism; the dangers of too much dependency and measures for diversification and change tourism patterns to minimize impacts

Thirty-six candidates attempted this question. Many of the candidates approached the answer as seen from the side of those employed in tourism rather than from the perceptions of the potential tourist and therefore the pull and push factors of global tourism. Hence in many answers there were references to micro-elements which annoy tourists as polluted beaches, uncontrolled litter and illegal dumping, high prices and others; but then little reference to accessibility by air, land or sea, political stability, climate and overall standard i.e macro-elements which go with GLOBAL tourism.

Paper IIB

Question 1 – Growth of the world’s population; reasons; resulting environmental problems; developing countries

Seventy-four candidates answered this question. In fact this was one of the most answered questions. Some candidates were not exhaustive in their answers especially to (a) and generally there were repetitions in giving reasons for population growth. With regards to (b) most of the students disregarded what was asked in the question and were out of point due to the fact that they did not refer to developing countries.

Question 2 – Renewable energy; wind farms

This was quite a straightforward question and most of the students answered it correctly. In fact question 2 was the question that was mostly answered by the candidates. Nevertheless, some of the answers given especially to (a) did not state a key phrase that is ‘wind farms are a renewable source of energy’.

Question 3 – Deforestation; how does it occur; consequences

This was again another favourite among the candidates. Most of the answers to (b) could have been more detailed, although over all the average marks were quite good.

Question 4 – Farming; management; physical inputs; human inputs; local examples

Question 4 was one of the least answered questions. Some of the candidates answering this question did not understand section (c) as some described the problems faced in all the four examples identified.

Question 5 – Transport; decline in public transport patronage and increase in car ownership; foreign examples of public transport both in developing and developed countries

Most candidates were not able to give examples of public transport for both the developing and developed countries. For both questions, that is (a) and (b), the answers were not exhaustive.

Question 6 – Acid rain; how is it formed; examples; reduction

Diagrams were rarely used to explain how acid rain was formed. The diagrams that were used by some of the candidates were not up to standard. The answers for both questions were not detailed. Few candidates provided the correct examples of the four countries experiencing acid rain.

Question 7 – Tourism; accommodation; Government new strategy

This type of question, as in the case of question 5 and question 10 is generally answered by candidates who sit for an examination without studying the material that is in the syllabus. This is mainly because it is a question which requires general knowledge since it refers to the local situation. Most of the students answering this question did not do well. First of all because they did not explain well (a) and most of the candidates did not know the disadvantages of having a lot of tourists in summer. Moreover, a large number of the respondents did not know what the Government strategy was; which shows lack of general knowledge.

Question 8 – Urban models

It is evident that the number of candidates that replied to this question did not study this topic. This is mainly because most of the respondents did not know the names of the two models illustrated in the examination paper. Moreover, the description was not detailed enough and the examples were limited.

Question 9 – Fossil fuels; coal; non-renewable energy

Twenty-two per cent of the candidates answered this question, which was straightforward. Nevertheless, there were some respondents who were not able to answer in detail and some of the marks given were low.

Question 10 – Travel patterns; employment location; social behaviour

Question 10 required general knowledge from the local situation. Evidently most of the respondents are not aware of the situation and could not correlate the fact that Valletta the Capital City is situated in a strategic position and caters for a large part of the administrative and retail section of the island. Moreover, most of the candidates were of the idea that Valletta has a large population.

**The Chairperson
Board of Examiners
July 2007**