

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
ADVANCED LEVEL**

GEOGRAPHY

May 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

Part 1: Statistical Information

**Table 1: MATSEC Advanced Level Geography, May 2012
Distribution of Grades**

Grades	A	B	C	D	E	F	Absent	TOTAL
No. of candidates	6	10	24	10	3	5	1	59
Total %	10.1	16.9	40.7	16.9	5.1	8.5	1.7	100

Part 2: Comments on the Candidates' Answers

General Comments

A total of 59 candidates enrolled for the Geography Advanced level examination for the May 2012 session. Three candidates were absent for the examination. In all 56 candidates sat for the examination. The examination consisted of three papers. Each paper consisted of three sections and the candidates were to select one question from each section. From Paper I the questions that were mostly selected were Section A Question 2, 71 per cent, Section B Question 4, 75 per cent and Section C Question 8, 59 per cent. With regards to Paper II the questions that were mostly selected were Section A Question 1, 46 per cent, Section B Question 6, 39 per cent and Section C Question 9, 57 per cent. The questions answered in Paper III were Section A Question 1, 86 per cent, Section B Question 6, 98 per cent and Section C Question 9, 63 per cent. It seems that generally candidates tend to prefer to answer questions that reflect broader geographical topics or experienced events, rather than questions that entail more detailed geographic knowledge and theories. The performance of the candidates varied between relatively good to fairly good. In a few cases candidates obtained low marks. Reasons why candidates fail to obtain higher marks are: not reading the question in full, not providing the necessary examples or the requested points. Lack of understanding of the questions often led to provision of generic replies and at times irrelevant discussion points. In addition, drawings often fail to include labels or are not large enough to make them legible and neat.

Recommendations by examiners include that the questions should be read carefully. Diagrams should be drawn neatly and should be larger. If possible candidates should use different colours in diagrams to show different aspects. Question numbers and question parts should be listed next to the answers.

Detailed Comments

Paper I

Section A: Physical Geography of the Maltese Islands

Question 1: Geology and Geomorphology

Part (a) seemed to be relatively easy as the candidates did not find difficulties in the explanation. However, in part b candidates presented weak answers. Candidates explained the orientation and location of Maghlaq fault but did not elaborate on the resultant landforms produced by the second set of faults. Overall performance for this question was average.

Question 2: Water resources and environmental issues related to water resources

This was the most popular question with the candidates. Overall the performance of the candidates was satisfactory, where many candidates demonstrated proper knowledge about the catchment characteristics of water resources on the Maltese Islands. Loss of marks was mainly due to not providing distinct explanations between the physical and human constraints for Question 2b and presenting weak arguments on water management and conservation options in Question 2c.

Question 3: Ecological systems

The candidates who attempted this question scored above average with only one candidate providing below average performance. Candidates addressed satisfactorily all three parts of the questions, with Question 3b being most challenging of the lot.

Section B: Human Geography of the Maltese Islands**Question 4: Communications, Transport, Roads**

The candidates answered Question 4 relatively well. Candidates who obtained low marks either did not provide the necessary information or were not exhaustive in their replies. Also some common mistakes included not giving 3 examples or repeating the same example. The same comment applies for part b, where some of the responses were not elaborate as requested in the question.

The average mark for Question 4 was 18. This indicates that the candidates answered the question in a satisfactory manner.

Question 5: Population growth and decline, Distribution of population, Settlements

The candidates who answered question 5 understood the graph. Common mistakes that led to lower marks were similar to the reasons given for question 4, that is not giving the required 4 reasons or stating similar reasons. With regards to the second part some of the candidates did not understand exactly the important role that data plays for planning purposes.

With regards to Question 5 the average mark was 17. In this case the candidates scored fairly good marks.

Question 6: Population and settlement, Industries, Services

The answer given to question 6 was good. It is evident that livable experiences make the candidates more knowledgeable about the subject. Repercussions mentioned were from the population perspective, industrial activity and services and how these can influence a population and its trends. The measures that were mentioned included existing practices and possible future measures.

Section C: Fieldwork and Statistical Techniques**Question 7: Fieldwork component, sampling**

Most of the time students only answered half the question, therefore losing half of the marks for part a. In part b some of the students went out of point by describing other fieldwork techniques such as the use of the clinometer. Others answered half of the questions, providing only either the advantages or the disadvantages. Some students also failed to draw diagrams where it was clearly stated in the question to illustrate their answers.

Question 8: Relationship data, Chi-squared test

Most of the students answered this question. Some students did not work out the Chi-square properly. When asked about the hypotheses students mixed them and in some cases the two hypotheses were stated without specifying which one was the null hypothesis and which one was the alternative hypothesis. With regards to part b candidates lost marks when they did not show all the workings. With regards to part d, in some cases, students had a good argument but then accepted the opposite hypothesis.

Question 9: Cartographic Component

Most of the students provided good answers and diagrams.

Paper 2

Section A: Atmospheric Processes

Question 1: Global circulation

Overall the candidates' performance was satisfactory and many candidates provided sound knowledge about the formation of the Hadley cell for Question 1a. A few candidates provided weak answers in Question 1bi, showing lack of abilities in linking atmospheric processes described in Question 1a to the formation of the Intertropical Convergence Zone. The linkages with the formation of desert (Question 1bii) was better explained.

Question 2: Sources of atmospheric energy

The answers to this question scored from very poor to irrelevant to very good and excellent. This is mostly attributed to candidates not understanding properly the requirements of the question and thus providing generic and sometimes irrelevant discussion points (e.g. the albedo factor); whilst on the other hand, there was a different category of candidates who gave very detailed and precise answers in discussing the factors that affect insolation (that is, sun-earth distance, altitude of the sun, and solar output, ozone layer).

Question 3: Environmental issues

The performance of the candidates could have been better with no candidates scoring above the 17 out of 24 marks. The answers for Question 3a were mostly limited to describing climatic factors with very negligible reference to human activities such as deforestation, overgrazing, poor cropping methods. Answers for Question 3b were generally weak and lacked the necessary detail in explaining drought adaptation measures.

Section B: Geomorphology

Question 4: Processes of weathering and erosion

The performance of the candidates could have been better with no candidates scoring above the 17 out of 24 marks. It was rather disappointing to notice that candidates' skills in describing specific terminology related to mass movement were weak with generic, vague or repetitive answers given (Question 4a). Answers for Question 4b were average whilst again, very poor in Question 4c. Some candidates erroneously

provided examples of soil conservation techniques rather slope stabilisation techniques such as contour ploughing.

Question 5: Coastal landforms

The performance of the candidates was satisfactory with quite a few candidates giving appropriate answers for both parts of Question 5. A few minor imprecisions were noticed in Question 5bi in attributing lack of vegetation to the formation of yellow dunes.

Question 6: Fluvial systems and processes

This question had the highest range of marks, with candidates scoring as low as 3 out of 24 to full marks. Quite a few candidates however did provide very good definitions of the hydrological characteristics.

Section C: Biospheric Processes and Patterns

Question 7: Soil properties

Most of the students did not understand the question correctly, instead of describing the properties of the soil, they just focused on the four major components of the soil. Also, not all students drew the diagrams even if they were specifically asked to do so in the question.

Question 8: Processes of soil formation

Not all the students mentioned all the five stages, as asked. Some of the diagrams lacked proper explanation.

Question 9: Vegetation formations and climatic conditions

Most of the students focused only on the vegetation cover of a particular biome. Some students failed to use technical words such as maquis, garrigue and steppe. Candidates focused more on the properties of vegetation such as having thick bark and waxy leaves but failed to describe the climate.

Paper 3

Section A: Human Geography and the Developing World

Question 1: Migration

The candidates answered Question 1 relatively well. Some candidates elaborated on the definitions of 'internal' and 'external' migration, stating the different types of migrations that exist while others only provided the meaning of the terms. Nearly all candidates provided examples as requested. Only 1 case did not provide the correct definition of the terms. The second part of the question was straight forward. Some candidates did not refer to the first part of the question when answering, which influenced the mark. Other mistakes included not providing 2 examples of host countries.

The average mark for Question 1 was 19. This indicates that the candidates answered the question in a satisfactory manner.

Question 2: Human Development Index

With regards to question 2, the average mark was 16. The respondents knew the definition of the HDI. The role of the 4 indicators was not discussed in the expected manner, the answers reflected mostly what the indicators were and did not explain their role within the index. The third part showed limited knowledge regarding how the candidates can show ways in which the HDI can be used to improve the standard of living of developing populations.

Question 3: Environmental issues, Physical factors affecting development, Soil erosion and degradation

The average mark in question 3 was 19. The candidates understood the question properly. The 5 anthropogenic causes were generally mentioned and the marks varied according to the detail given and the examples provided. The map helped the candidates in that they were able to identify which areas were mostly at risk. Marks varied according to the detail given in the answers by the candidates.

Section B: Issues in Resource Management

Question 4: Views of resource use

No one answered this question.

Question 5: Problems of global resource use, environmental issues

Only one student answered this question. The reply left much to be desired.

Question 6: Renewable energy, non-renewable energy

This question was answered by 98 per cent of the students. The first part of the question was generally answered correctly by the candidates. The second part of the question was also generally answered correctly. Most of the students opted for the solar, wind and hydrothermal energy, some of the students also opted for the geothermal energy. The candidates provided a good description of the advantages and disadvantages. The third part of the question (c) was also answered correctly by the candidates. Some points that could have also been considered were political issues and cross border issues.

Section C: The Geography of tourism and recreation

Question 7: Changes in transport technologies and networks, economic impacts

Most candidates answered Question 7, 63 per cent. The average mark for question 7 was 15. The answers provided at times did not include all transport networks. With regards to part b some answers were not directly related to the question leaving the answer somewhat poor.

Question 8: Myrdal's concept of cumulative causation

The average mark for Question 8 was 13. The answers indicated limited knowledge how to apply Myrdals' model to contemporary issues. The management practices proposed were not elaborate in a manner to satisfy a question of 12 marks.

Question 9: Environmental impacts and conservation

With regards to question 9, the average mark was 17. All candidates knew the definition of the term honeypots and generally the 2 examples were mentioned. The 3 environmental impacts were generally good and elaborate in their discussion. The results with regards to part c generally mentioned sustainability and eco-tourism and the examples indicated a good understanding of conservation measures.

**Chairperson
Examiners' Report 2012**