



L-Università  
ta' Malta

MATSEC  
Examinations Board



# Examiners' Report

## AM Geography

First Session 2021

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## A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for the Advanced Matriculation (AM) Geography June 2021 Main Session exam was 36.

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	TOTAL
Candidates	2	5	9	6	8	6	0	36
% OF TOTAL	5.6	13.9	25.0	16.7	22.2	16.7	0.0	100

*Table 1: Distribution of grades for AM Geography 2021 First Session*

## B. GENERAL REMARKS

### General Remarks on the Coursework

Candidates sitting for the AM Geography First Session exam were expected to present the Individual Field Report (20% of the total mark) but **not** the two Short-term field reports. For the latter, the candidates were awarded the full marks (8% of the total mark) as a COVID-19 mitigation measure.

The examiners moderated a total of 27 Individual Fieldwork Reports in three different schools (two state schools and one independent school). In addition, a total of three Individual Fieldwork Reports were submitted by three private candidates. These were corrected and the candidates were interviewed online as part of the procedure involving private candidates.

The vast majority of marks awarded for the Individual Field Reports by their respective tutors were confirmed by the moderators. Considering the restrictions imposed by the global pandemic, an interesting variety of topics were selected from human geography ranging from internal migration, urban development, settlements, retail and tourism, while coastal and air pollution were selected from physical geography. Some candidates even based their coursework reports on the effects of COVID-19 on their selected topics. Syllabus guidelines related to the nature of the topics (small scale and specific) were generally followed.

The following remarks reflect comments made by the moderators:

1. Overall, the reports were structured well. The aims were identified correctly in the introductory chapter by many of the candidates. Methods of data collection were appropriate and quite varied including the use of online questionnaires and social media platforms to engage participants. Remote sensing data such as Google Maps and Google Earth and data provided from the Environment Resources Authority and the National Statistics Office showed that candidates employed a variety of data collection methods, despite the unprecedented restrictions.
2. Candidates made use of a variety of tools to analyse and represent data, ranging from interpretation of aerial photos to graphs, tables and descriptive statistical techniques. While the syllabus addendum noted that basic statistical techniques will be allowed in the coursework as a mitigation factor for the 2021 Main session, several candidates also made use of appropriate statistical methods of analysis to find any relationship between the data.

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3. While all coursework contained a reference section at the end of the report, it was noted that candidates obtained their research mainly from online sources, even though books and scientific papers are strongly encouraged to be used. Candidates should also be guided to follow the standards of academic referencing, mainly through in-text citations to be able to place their study within the context of other published literature. While figures and maps were always labelled, they were rarely cited within the text.
4. Conclusions were often linked to the research questions, but few candidates included the problems encountered, further studies and the wider significance of their research.
5. In some instances, the report was written in the first person and offered personal viewpoints in the analysis of results. It is suggested that in upcoming coursework, candidates should ensure that the writing remains objective, especially by following the academic style of writing in the third person.

In addition to the above points, the following additional comments and recommendations are being proposed:

- The aims and objectives should be clear. Candidates should also differentiate between aims, objectives and research questions;
- All figures should be properly annotated and referenced;
- All maps should have a scale, a North sign or compass directions, a key and a title. If relevant, the source from where the map was taken should also be included (e.g. Google maps, 2019);
- Candidates should also be encouraged to use the PA Geoportal to determine if the site under study is protected etc. and/or the ERA website to obtain data/information such as the air pollution etc.

### General Remarks on the Written Examination

In the AM Geography exam paper candidates had to answer four questions from a total of eight. As in previous years, the AM Geography exam consisted of two written papers which carry 36% of the total mark each. Paper 1 set out to assess the knowledge and skills of candidates in relation to Physical geography topics, while Paper 2 assesses the knowledge and skills of candidates in Human geography topics. Each paper was of three hours duration.

For Paper I, the most selected question was Question 5 with 79% of the candidates responding to this question. With regards to Paper II, 76% of the candidates opted for Question 8, making it the most popular choice amongst the candidates.

The performance of the candidates was overall satisfactory with the majority of the cohort obtaining a Grade C (25%).

## C. COMMENTS ON PAPER I AND PAPER II

### PAPER I

#### *Question 1*

35% of candidates answered Question 1 on the Earth's radiation budget and overall, the question was well-answered. In part (a), which carried 10 marks, only a few responses correctly explained the role of incoming

and outgoing radiation in maintaining the Earth's radiation budget. Despite this, in part (b) which carried 7 marks, and which dealt with a discussion on how human activities have influenced the radiation budget, all candidates referred to greenhouse gases and mentioned various anthropogenic sources. Part (c), on the impacts caused by the imbalance in the radiation budget, and which carried 8 marks, was overall well-answered, the most common responses were the rise in sea-level and extreme weather events.

### *Question 2*

71% answered Question 2 on the seismically active East African rift valley systems. In part (a), which carried 10 marks, candidates generally referred to the presence of lakes and volcanoes in their description, with only a few candidates providing a thorough description that also included the formation of rift valleys and faulting. Many candidates confused oceanic with continental rift valleys, and hence incorrectly answered in relation to sea floor spreading, especially evident in part (b), (also carrying 10 marks) where candidates had to provide an annotated sketch. Although candidates generally fared better in part (c), on the long-term continental changes in East Africa, the overall answers to Question 2 were below the expected standard.

### *Question 3*

Question 3, which deals with a discussion on coastal protection schemes, was answered by 65% of the candidates. Considering that the discussion alone carried 25 marks, several answers were quite short. A few responses were based on a description of the various processes of coastal erosion, without mentioning soft engineering approaches. On the other hand, candidates who performed quite well in Question 3 provided an adequate discussion, naming the different hard and soft engineering approaches, their advantages and disadvantages but also complementing their answer with various labelled diagrams.

### *Question 4*

Question 4, which dealt with the problem of water scarcity in the Maltese Islands, was answered by 71% of the candidates. A variation in the level of detail could be noted in part (a), for the explanation of how geographical and hydrogeological conditions of the Maltese Islands limit freshwater availability. In part (b), which carried 15 marks, candidates generally provided a good discussion of the forms of water harvesting and extraction. However, several responses limited the discussion to just one or two forms without discussing the development over the years, as the question requested.

### *Question 5*

Question 5 focused on the Maltese Islands' Mediterranean type of climate and was selected by 79% of the candidates, making it the most popular choice. In part (a), which alone carried 15 marks, the majority of candidates showed evidence of their knowledge on the characteristics of the Maltese Islands' climate. However, very few answers related directly to the data provided in the table, or quoted from the table. Answers to parts (b) and (c), each carrying 5 marks, were generally adequate, although several responses were quite vague and were not put into the context of the Maltese Islands' climatic conditions.

### *Question 6*

Question 6, dealing with the local factors responsible for precipitation patterns in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, was selected by 29% candidates. In part (a) (i), few answers directly referred to orographic rainfall, and most answers were quite short. In parts (a) (ii) and (a) (iii), which carried 10 and 5 marks respectively, a variation in the level of detail provided was noted.

### *Question 7*

35% of the candidates answered Question 7 on valley watercourse biodiversity in the Maltese Islands. Part (a), which carried 15 marks, dealt with the species community in valley watercourses. The majority of answers were focused, erroneously, on the garigue, rupestral and maquis vegetation communities found growing on valley sides. Numerous responses also failed to describe the fauna of this environment, with most answers describing the adaptations of floral species only. Answers to question 7 (b), dealing with the threats and pressures in valley watercourses, were generally correct although many failed to discuss various pressures, often relying on discussing only one or two threats.

### *Question 8*

The least popular question, answered by only 15% of the candidates was Question 8, which dealt with global surface winds. In part (a) (i), candidates generally referred to the differences between the equator and the poles, with various levels of detail to discuss the atmospheric processes responsible for the distribution of global surface winds. A variation in the performance of responses was clear, despite the question being answered by a handful of candidates. Candidates who fared well in part (a) (i), answered part (a) (ii) well, with ample details on the three main global wind zones and provided an adequate schematic diagram in part (b).

## **PAPER II**

### *Question 1*

This question was answered by 68% of the candidates. In question 1 (a), which carried 5 marks, candidates had to explain the purpose of a dot density map and describe its key characteristics. Most of the candidates answered correctly. In part (b), which carried 12 marks, candidates had to discuss the physical and human factors that affect population density. Most of the responses were satisfactory and discussed the factors relatively well. In part (c), which dealt with the dynamics of population and carried 8 marks, candidates had to provide a diagram and explain the concept of population dynamics. Most responses did not answer correctly as there was an inadequate understanding of the question.

### *Question 2*

Question 2 was answered by 53% of the candidates and was about agriculture. In part (a), which carried 6 marks in total, candidates had to describe the key characteristics of intensive subsistence farming and shifting cultivation. Most responses did not discuss the differences between the two farming types properly. Part (b) carried 12 marks and candidates had to explain physical and human factors influencing agricultural activities in the EU. Again, answers were approximate and hence precious marks were lost. Candidates had to discuss the impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy on agricultural activities in the EU in part (c). Answers were overall satisfactory even though most were rather brief.

### *Question 3*

44% of the candidates answered this question which focused on hydro-electric power (HEP). Part (a) carried 7 marks and candidates had to explain how a hydro-power station works. Most of the answers given were correct. In part (b), which carried 6 marks, candidates had to discuss three important factors determining site selection for a hydro-power station. Some of the answers were rather generic and did not meet the

desired detail expected for such a question. Part (c) carried 12 marks and candidates had to discuss benefits and costs of a multi-purpose river project. Most of the candidates answered correctly and gave adequate answers.

#### *Question 4*

This question was answered by only 15% of the candidates. Question 4 (a) carried 12 marks and candidates had to explain the key characteristics and the relevance of the North-South divide in the contemporary world. Most of the candidates did know what the Brandt report entailed and hence explained the key characteristics correctly. However, answers were relatively brief given that the question carried 12 marks. Question 4 (b) carried 13 marks and dealt with the concepts of Free Trade and Fair Trade. Most responses were either wrong or did not meet the desired detail expected for such a question.

#### *Question 5*

Question 5 was answered by a low number of by 18% of candidates and was about the central place theory. Part (a) carried 10 marks and candidates had to explain generalisations made regarding the spacing, size and functions of settlements using a hierarchy diagram. Most responses drew the relevant diagram accurately but failed to annotate it correctly. With regard to the explanation, many were able to explain the different types of settlements instead of the generalisations. In part (b), which carried 6 marks, candidates had to explain the range, threshold and sphere of influence of central places. While a good number of answers were correct, others were either inadequate or incorrect. Question 5 (c) related to the Christaller's model and carried 9 marks. Most of the answers were rather superficial, and the diagrams were either not included or drawn incorrectly.

#### *Question 6*

65% of the candidates chose this question, which dealt with multinational companies. Part (a) of the question carried 4 marks and was answered correctly by most candidates. In part (b), the candidates had to explain factors leading to the growth of multinational companies. This question, which carried 5 marks, was, for the most part, answered incorrectly. Question 6 (c) carried 8 marks and dealt with factors determining the location of multinational companies. Overall, the answers given were correct and accurate. Part (d) also carried 8 marks and focused on the advantages and disadvantages of multinational companies. Answers were, on the whole, satisfactory.

#### *Question 7*

59% of the candidates opted to answer this question dealing with global oil consumption. Part (a) carried 6 marks and candidates had to explain the main findings of a graph related to global oil consumption. Most of the answers were either incorrect due to misinterpretation of the graph or inconclusive. In part (b), which carried 6 marks, candidates had to discuss the negative impacts linked to oil consumption. Most of the candidates gave good answers to this question. Question 7 (c) dealt with the risks of oil transportation and carried 7 marks. Most answers produced were correct and accurate. The final part question (7d) carried 6 marks and referred to the role and purpose of OPEC. In this regard, most answers were short and vague.

#### *Question 8*

Question 8, dealing with the tourism industry, was answered by 76% of the candidates hence making it the most popular choice amongst in Paper 2. Part (a) carried 5 marks and was answered correctly by the vast

majority of candidates. Candidates were expected to describe the distribution of inbound tourists in Malta. Question 8 (b), which carried 8 marks, focused on factors that led to the overall trend described in the given figure. While some responses were correct, a number of answers failed to understand the requirements of the question. In part (c), which carried 6 marks, the candidates were asked to list positive and negative impacts of the tourism industry in the Maltese Islands. Most of the candidates answered correctly and gave satisfactory answers. Part (d) of the question, which also carried 6 marks, dealt with the role of the EU in supporting sustainable tourism. Overall answers were unsatisfactory and too brief.

#### **D. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

In Paper 1, the overall performance was noted to be below the expected standard. It is recommended that candidates read the question thoroughly before attempting to answer. The use of geographical terms is also strongly encouraged. On the other hand, candidates who fared well, had a consistent positive performance across all four questions answered.

The performance of candidates in Paper 2 was overall satisfactory. Most of the candidates were able to express themselves in a fairly clear and concise manner and produced good answers. Some further recommendations are: (1) Candidates are encouraged to start a new page for each question; (2) Candidates need to carefully read the question and analyse the allocated marks to it; (3) the inclusion of figures and diagrams as part of the answer and make sure these are legible and well-annotated.

Chairperson  
Examination Panel 2021