

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

GEOGRAPHY

May 2008

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

**IM Geography
May 2008 Session
Examiners' Report**

Part 1: Statistical Information

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May 2008 session.

Table 1: Distribution of Grades awarded in May 2008

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	Abs	Total
Number	3	10	18	18	11	24	7	91
% of Total	3.30	10.99	19.78	19.78	12.09	26.37	7.69	100

Part 2: Comments regarding candidates' performance

From year to year examiners have observed that candidates obtain lower marks in Module 1: Physical Geographical Processes than in the other three modules. This year, the average marks for Questions 1, 2 and 3 in Module 1 were 6, 8 and 7 respectively. In contrast, the average marks for most other questions in the other three modules are around 12. More students than last year have also answered four questions instead of the required five questions as stated in the Geography Intermediate Syllabus. It is therefore necessary to stress once again the importance of addressing this problem. Physical geography is at the basis of all human activity. Candidates for geography at Intermediate Level are expected to show evidence of deeper understanding of physical geographical processes than they are consistently showing from year to year.

Section 1: Physical Geographical Processes

Question 1

This was the question in which students obtained the lowest average mark from all the questions in the paper. Most candidates failed to explain the effect of depressions entering the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean through the Strait of Gibraltar on mean annual rainfall in Valencia. The easterly movement of depressions over the Mediterranean Sea and the consequent low mean annual rainfall in Nicosia was also ignored in most answers. For part (b) of the question the effect of the different rates of cooling and heating of the sea and land was often not explained.

Question 2

Most answers to part (a) of this question were satisfactory. Most answers to part (b) often included explanations of the effect of rural and urban environments on percolation, whilst the question required an explanation of the effect of basin morphology on lag time. Few candidates who attempted this question explained the relationship between basin morphology and lag time in enough detail.

Question 3

It is very preoccupying to note that some candidates could not give the name of two karst caves in the Maltese Islands and no candidate could name a karst cave in the Mediterranean region. Answers to part (b) were in general also poor. The effect of chemical weathering was in most cases ignored. This too is rather worrying since the effect of chemical weathering, particularly carbonation, on the formation of caves is also covered in the geography syllabus at SEC level. Answers to part (c) were in most cases very satisfactory and explained the different theories of the processes leading to the formation of collapsed roofs of caves.

Section 2: Human Geographical Processes**Question 4**

Most of the answers provided by candidates to part (a) were correct. The interpretation of the graphs provided were accurate. Answers to part (b) were also correct with most candidates offering interesting reasons for the population changes.

Question 5

Unfortunately few candidates selected this question. However for section (a) good reasons for the change in the land use pattern shown in the detailed figures were provided. Answers to part (b) varied with a number of candidates failing to explain in sufficient detail five land use problems that result as a consequence of intensive coastal development. These could have included: sewage overflows, density of population, traffic congestion, lack of parking space, high-priced buildings and congested beaches among other factors.

Question 6

Definitions for part (a) of 'industrial estate' were overall correct. Answers to part (b) dealing with the grouping of factories were interesting as many issues were mentioned including: economies of scale when it comes to land use planning, infrastructure services all the factories and services to the factories become more efficient such as refuse collection. Answers to part (c) largely concentrated along the lines of these points: flat land, away from urban areas, noise from factories will not affect urban zones, work force available, educated work force and broad areas that can accommodate the building and widening of roads.

Section 3: The Man-Environment Relationship**Question 7**

The overall answers were correct however some of the diagrams requested were drawn rather shabbily and lacked the necessary detail. As for the answers to part (b) regarding the benefits and drawbacks of using groundwater most of the answers were correct and included the main points expected from such answers. In part (c) answers about abstracting groundwater haphazardly were intelligently written and included the effects upon agriculture, soil and drinking water.

Question 8

This was one of the most popular questions and most of the answers provided were properly presented. Answers included a satisfactory discussion of a range of factors. Answers to part (b) were also overall correct and discussed in satisfactory detail. The answers clearly showed that candidates were very aware of the positive and negative impacts of tourism.

Question 9

The candidates answering this question provided fairly good answers with a few including the issues related to the carbon footprint, the results of industrialization over the last 200 years, air traffic and increase in global population. Answers to part (b) included a slightly better discussion of a variety of effects of global warming. Responses to part (c) were also in general satisfactory including a discussion of a range of measures that are being taken to combat future global warming.

Section 4: Fieldwork and Mapwork

Question 10

Most answers to this question were satisfactory. In part (c) some candidates could not explain the meaning of the Nearest Neighbour Index obtained in part (b) of this question. Most candidates were aware of the problems associated with the use of the Nearest Neighbour Analysis as a means of measuring dispersion.

Question 11

Most candidates could explain how wind speed and wind direction are shown on a wind rose but less could explain how calm periods are represented. The uses of rose diagrams supplied by candidates were limited, often restricted to navigation.

Question 12

Answers to this question were in general poor. It looks like most candidates lacked the practice of drawing morphological maps. Some candidates are aware of the use of morphological maps but had difficulty in giving an example of a fieldwork investigation that would require morphological mapping.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners
July 2008