

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

GEOGRAPHY

MAY 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

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

Grades	A	B	C	D	E	F	Absent	TOTAL
No. of candidates	7	21	35	29	15	34	4	145
Total %	4.8	14.5	24.1	20.0	10.3	23.4	2.8	100.0

General comments

A total of 145 candidates sat for the Geography Intermediate exam in May 2012. The examiners noted that several candidates restrict their answers to descriptions of diagrams, movement patterns or situations when, in fact, they were asked to discuss or account for these patterns. This indicates that candidates are exhibiting lower order skills but are failing to engage in higher order thinking skills. It is important to note that the locational knowledge displayed by candidates is very limited. Most candidates had difficulty in relating some theoretical concepts to actual real life examples.

Section 1: Physical Geographical Processes

Question 1

Most of the candidates who answered this question focused on the formation of the Hadley, Ferrel and Polar Cells but failed to explain the effect of the Coriolis Force on the westerly direction of westerly winds in part (a). In part (b) some candidates linked the formation of high deserts with areas of high insolation but completely ignored the effect of high pressure areas with sinking air. Most candidates considered the occurrence of high temperature as the major characteristic of a desert instead of drought conditions.

Question 2

The majority of candidates' replies for part (a) of this question indicate a poor knowledge of the climatic conditions that led to the formation of river valleys in the Maltese Islands. Most candidates were not aware of the role of the climate of the Pleistocene in the formation of river valleys in Malta. Instead, most candidates considered today's Mediterranean climate to be responsible for the formation of Ghasel valley. The replies for part (b) of this question were in most cases mediocre. The erosional processes responsible for the formation of river valleys described by students ranged from "plants digging roots deep into the rock" to erosion by sand carried by wind from the Sahara, acid rain, onion-skin weathering, the impact of rain droplets, collision plate boundaries and grykes. Only one candidate was familiar with the processes of abrasion, corrosion and attrition.

Question 3

This was the most answered question in Module 1. Part (a) of this question required candidates to explain the formation of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. However, most candidates spent too much time describing the different types of plate boundaries instead of concentrating on the formation of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Some candidates focused on evidence brought forward by scientists to support the theory of continental drift and then moved on to explain the importance of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge in proving this theory. Some candidates obtained very good marks for their reply to this question. Most answers to part (b) of this question were satisfactory. However, very few candidates mentioned fissure volcanoes, basaltic lava and its characteristics.

Section 2: Human Geographical Processes

Question 4

Most answers to part (a) of this question did not describe the geographical shift in the location of the largest cities as requested in the question. Candidates concentrated on the numeric data shown in the table but were not proficient enough to know the global location of the cities involved. For part (b) of this question, several candidates described the attractions of cities instead of giving reasons for the locational shift of the largest cities from Europe to Asia. Most answers for part (c) of the question were very of the required level.

Question 5

Answers to part (a) were weaker than those provided for part (b) and the main reason is that candidates were not aware of the administrative initiatives and legislation done by successive governments to increase the number of holdings. As stated, answers to part (b) were largely correct as the local situation is a reflection of what goes on in other countries and many examples can be found in books which were cited in the answers.

Question 6

For part (a) most candidates described the shape of the population pyramids instead of accounting for the shape. Answers for part (b) of the question lacked a discussion on the types of migration resulting from these population structures. The discussion of interrelationship between population structure, migration patterns and standard of living was generally poor. Some statements were discriminatory and tended to emphasise only the negative impacts of immigration from southern to northern Mediterranean countries. Some answers indicated misconceptions about life in southern Mediterranean countries as in the case of a candidate who stated that women in southern Mediterranean countries don't work.

Section 3: The Man-Environment Relationship

Question 7

Most of the answers that were requested to explain the importance of the ozone layer were overall correct. However in the majority of cases candidates mixed up the causes of ozone layer depletion with the causes of global warming. Some candidates did not even mention the term CFC.

Question 8

Few candidates knew the precise meaning of 'waste water treatment'. Most of the answers to part (a) were rather sketchy. A number of excellent answers were given for parts (b) and (c) of the question dealing with the environmental benefits of treating waste water and the negative impact of the waste water plants.

Question 9

Defining 'garigue' proved to be rather problematic for some candidates whilst the better ones gave excellent answers, some of which were illustrated with sketches. Most answers to the question about the adaptation of the garigue vegetation to the Mediterranean climate were correct. Damage to the micro-environment of the garigue was well tackled and candidates were confident in the answers.

Section 4: Fieldwork and Mapwork

Question 10

Most answers to part (a) were correct. However, some candidates stated that the dots in Figure 6 shows population density. This indicates that some candidates are confusing the concepts of population and population density. Most answers to part (b) were also correct.

Question 11

Most of the candidates were not accurate in explaining the components of a pie-chart in part (a). The plotting of the pie chart was accurate in most answers to part (b).

Question 12

The majority of answers to part (a) were correct. Only a few candidates tackled part (b) of this question correctly. Answers to part (c) of this question varied depending on the investigation proposed. However, most candidates were knowledgeable regarding the use of the quadrat for sampling reliability.

**Chairperson
Examination Panel**