

**UNIVERSITY OF MALTA**

**THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION  
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

**GEOGRAPHY**

**MAY 2017**

**EXAMINERS' REPORT**

**IM GEOGRAPHY MAY  
2017 SESSION  
EXAMINERS REPORT**

**Part 1 – Statistical Information**

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May 2017 session of the examination. This generally conforms to the classical normal Gaussian distribution and is remarkably similar to that of the May 2016 session.

TABLE 1

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	Absent	Total
<b>No. of Candidates</b>	7	14	31	15	11	15	10	103
<b>% of Candidates</b>	6.8	13.6	30.1	14.6	10.7	14.6	9.7	100

Table 2 shows how candidates opted for questions during the examination and the average grades that were obtained for each question. The maximum mark for each question was 20. Candidates were bound to choose one question from each section and one other question from any section. A few candidates attempted only four questions despite the clear instructions in the rubric. Questions 2 and 8 proved to be the most popular choices having been chosen by 67 and 68 candidates respectively.

TABLE 2

Question Number	Section 1			Section 2			Section 3			Section 4		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Number of attempted questions</b>	18	67	35	33	27	46	34	68	44	36	34	21
<b>Average marks obtained</b>	8	13	12	12	13	11	14	12	12	9	13	15

Table 2 reveals that candidates tended to score better in Section 3 (Man-Environment Relationship) than any other section. This may reflect the inherently applied character and problem-solving approach of this section. Once again, candidates performed most poorly in Section 1 (Physical Geographical Processes) and this may be a cause of some concern; especially for question 1. More details are provided in Part 2 of this report.

## Part 2 – Detailed comments regarding Candidates' performance

### Section 1: Physical Geographical Processes

#### **Question 1**

A limited number of candidates chose to answer this question and most of them did not understand its reference to solar insolation. Repetition of the captioned statement was common. Candidates limited their responses to reflection back in space without providing a source for such reflection. Question (d) was very poorly discussed. Only 2 candidates referred to the sun's rays striking at different angles on the globe depening on latitude and only one candidate referred to albedo. Most candidates restricted their responses to man-made issues whereas the whole focus of the question was restricted to purely physical processes.

#### **Question 2**

Overall acceptable responses were given by candidates, some were not specific to the constant movement of tectonic plates though they gave a detailed explaination on Wegener's theory of one large continental plate; Pangaea. Most of the responses were correct and candidates showed good knowledge of the types of plate boundaries and associated processes. Many provided diagrams but, despite this, some failed to attribute the right type of boundary to the required location; namely the Mediterranean region. Candidates whose responses in question (d) were considered incorrect, were not penalised if a correct description of the plate boundary listed in (d) was given in question (e). A small number of candidates showed a lack of understanding in locational geography, by for example listing the Himalayas Mountains as found in the Mediterrean Region.

#### **Question 3**

While an overall correct listing of processes related to the hydrological cycle were given some failed to explain these in detail and limited their answer to a very basic overview. Some candidates included a further diagram, mostly a flow diagram, to illustrate all processes related to water movement in question (b). Candidates seem to be proficient and familiar with terms related to the hydrological cycle but need to be able to give a detailed description of the processes.

### Section 2: Human Geographical Processes

#### **Question 4**

(a) Overall most candidates provided a correct definition of site and situation, others failed to give a precise definition of the term situation.  
(b) The answers presented a range of examples and most candidates showed that they had a good grasp of the four factors that influence the site of a settlement.  
(c) The main problem with the answers provided for this question was that a number of candidates just listed the factors. It must be stressed that with all cases a short essay-type question should be developed. Some candidates mentioned the river Nile, Egypt, India and the Monsoon; however, they failed to give a named example of an urban or rural settlement. A number of candidates mentioned Valletta, Marr, London and Rio de Janeiro.

#### **Question 5**

Few candidates selected this question.

(a) Definitions of 'secondary industry' were overall correct.  
(b) This was answered well by most candidates.  
(c) Answers dealing with the grouping of factories were poor. Many failed to mention economies of scale when it comes to land use planning. They also failed to identify the efficiencies in infrastructure services to all factories located in one area; such as refuse collection. Their answers largely concentrated on these points: 1) away from urban areas, 2) noise from factories will not affect urban zones, 3) availability of a work force, and 4) widening of roads.  
(d) Responses included: employment, boost to the economy, provision of local product, export and not relying on imports.

In parts (c) and (d) some candidates failed to provide a detailed response.

**Question 6**

(a) Some candidates wrote a short answer without considering the 8 marks assigned to this part. Most candidates did not give examples and did not take into consideration the projections indicated in Figure 2.

(b) Candidates had to discuss factors leading to population change in the Mediterranean. Several candidates just listed the factors and provided a short response

(c) Most answers identified migration, low birth rate, and an elderly population as the main changes that Malta will experience in its population.

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

**Question 7**

(a) A substantial number of candidates were able to point out the difference between a 'hard stone' and a 'soft stone' quarry.

(b) Candidates appear to understand some of the environmental impacts caused by the activity, especially the impacts on habitat destruction. They also showed an understanding that due to their location in ODZ areas the activity may result in the loss of indigenous and/or endemic flora and fauna. In addition, they mentioned the increased negative visual impact resulting from destruction of land. Many candidates mentioned landfilling for possible future use of abandoned quarries. However, there were candidates who came up with original feasible alternatives that were awarded good marks. Many argued that the landfill process is to be completed with a park or playing field concept after their reclamation.

(c) Most of the answers included the mention of an engineered landfill, or similar land reutilisation. The main pitfall was that some candidates were too brief in their answers.

**Question 8**

This was a very popular question with most providing relevant and detailed answers. Only a few candidates showed inadequate knowledge regarding global warming.

(a) The majority of candidates succeeded in pointing out that Global Warming is the observed and projected increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere. A substantial amount of candidates explained how 'global warming' is related to 'climate change'. Some candidates confused the greenhouse effect with the depletion of the ozone layer.

(b) Most candidates did not read the question well. Some of the answers lacked the expected level of detail; some candidates listed any negative effects of global warming, while others mentioned acid rain and a number of candidates confused crops with vegetation.

(c) Answers commonly included carpooling, the utilisation of more Eco-friendly means of transportation as well as the utilisation of renewable energy resource.

**Question 9**

(a) Question 9a was answered satisfactorily. Many candidates mentioned fertile soils and tourism as reasons why people inhabit volcanic areas. Some candidates also mentioned geothermal energy production and mineral resources.

(b) A variety of answers were provided regarding the adverse effect of volcanic activity. Airport closure, intoxicating fumes, effects of pyroclastic flows and lahars were the most mentioned effects.

(c) Most candidates provided a satisfactory answer. On the other hand, some candidates gave unrealistic examples: one should not build next to a volcano, walls should be built around a volcano, heat resistant houses should be built and building emergency shelters.

**Section 4: Fieldwork and Mapwork Skills**

**Question 10**

Most candidates failed to give five reasons to justify fieldwork as an important key element in geographical based enquiry in question (a). The reasons given were mostly related to physical geography fieldwork. Candidates applied good knowledge of differences between a questionnaire and a survey. When applying this knowledge to a particular case study, as asked in question (c) most responses failed to identify one scenario were both a questionnaire and survey can be utilised but provided two different activities.

**Question 11**

Overall correct responses were given. Some candidates failed to distinguish between a contour line and an isobar. Responses for question (c) were very detailed and exhaustive. Good observation skills in map reading were noted.

**Question 12**

Candidates showed good knowledge of how to work out and interpret the Nearest Neighbour Index. Some failed to show a good calculation or the table working in question (a). Interpretation of results in question (b) was overall correct and candidates gave a detailed explanation as to why the area can be considered as clustered. In question (b) candidates were allotted marks for a good interpretation based on their workings in question (a).

**General Remarks**

1. Many candidates seem to be unable to express themselves coherently in English. Few could produce a well-structured paragraph to answer questions.
2. Many candidates cannot express themselves in a consistent and logical manner.
3. At times candidates failed to take note of the marks allotted for each question. The marks are indicative of the breadth and depth of the answers required.

Chairperson  
Examination Panel 2017