

**UNIVERSITY OF MALTA**

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE**

**SEC**

**GEOGRAPHY**

**MAY 2015**

**EXAMINERS' REPORT**

**SEC Geography**  
**May 2015 Session**  
**Examiners' Report**

**Part 1: STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May 2015 session of the examination.

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>ABS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>PAPER A</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>PAPER B</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>% OF TOTAL</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The Geography SEC examination was held over two sessions with Paper I on the first day and Papers 2A and Paper 2B held simultaneously on another day. Candidates had to answer all of Paper 1 and four out of eight questions from Paper 2. In the latter, two questions out of four had to be chosen from each of two separate sections. The Project component was based on two field classes followed during the last two scholastic years under the tutor's guidance.

**PAPER I****Question 1**

The overall response to this question by paper A candidates was highly positive with only 13/148 candidates failing by obtaining one-half of the total marks allotted. The average mark for this paper was 10.6/16. Paper B candidates 30/45 candidates failed this question and the overall average mark awarded was 6.02/16. The question was divided into five parts. In part (a) the six-figure grid reference was to be given to two marked sites with paper A candidates answering correctly with a small margin of error and paper B candidates faring slightly worse especially confusing between the Northings and Eastings and inverting the sequence. A lack of numeracy was also evident with difficulties in dividing the measuring unit by ten. Part (b) asked for the compass direction of three sites from a named location. Practically most of the answers from both sets of candidates were correct. Part (c) was also answered correctly with all candidates identifying properly the types of trigonometrical stations presented on the map. Part (d) asked candidates to estimate the length of a marked, irregular stretch of road. Most candidates measured the length correctly but a number could not identify the measured length with the physical unit of measurement requested (metres). Part (e) presented the most difficulties to a number of Paper B candidates as they found it difficult to write six lines on Manikata by using the topographic information shown. Most of the failures in this first question were mainly due to obtaining low marks in this section.

**Question 2**

Identifying locations of named events, ocean currents, countries, mountain systems, and major ports were the components of each of the five sections in this question. All the locations that were to be identified were listed in the syllabus. One-quarter (37/148) of the candidates for Paper A and fifty-seven percent (26/45) for those candidates registered for paper B failed this question. Paper A candidates scored an average of 10.20/16 whilst Paper B candidates scored 5.49/16. A thorough weakness in

preparing and studying a basic requirement is evident. However most of the candidates who responded well obtained very high marks.

### **Question 3**

This question dealt with tectonic plates, plate margins and naming of selected plates; candidates were assisted with two figures. This topic is generally considered a favourite with most candidates in fact only 14/148 (9.5%) failed to obtain the pass mark for this question with A candidates answering better than Paper B candidates obtaining 8.11/10 for Paper B's 4.87/10. The main problem was in answers to part (i) where candidates were asked to explain the terms tectonic plates and plate margins. Almost two-thirds of paper B candidates (26/45) obtained a pass-mark for answering this question with a number of candidates obtaining very low marks pulling down the average mark.

### **Question 4**

A clear distinction between the two sets of candidates was evident from answers to this question on wave-cut platforms and erosion. Only 12.8 per cent of Paper A candidates (19/148) failed in providing answers of sufficient standard to pass, with an average mark of 4.99/7, whilst 19/45 of Paper B candidates failed the question dragging down the average mark to 3.29/7. Again as in the previous question answers to explaining 'wave-cut' platform were weak. In addition a number of candidates could not draw in the allotted space an annotated diagram how wave erosion contributes to coastal landforms and also to explain briefly the processes involved. Candidates who obtained high marks for this question provided excellent answers.

### **Question 5**

Most of the answers from both sets of candidates to this question were correct and good marks were scored throughout. In fact there was little distinction between the two sets of candidates: Paper A candidates scoring on average 2.91/3 and Paper Bs 2.42. It demanded candidates to 'fill-in-the-blanks' with six words given above a paragraph on wind erosion.

### **Question 6**

This question dealt with vegetation on Mediterranean hillsides and with the characteristics of the two major types of scrub that have resulted from the natural fires in the wooded areas. Most of the answers provided by paper A candidates were of sufficient standard to obtain a good mark (87%) whilst for paper B candidates more than two-thirds (27/45) failed to provide a sufficiently good answer to the first part of the question. On average marks allotted were as follows: Paper A - 4.45/6 and Paper B - 2.76/6.

### **Question 7**

Sketches of three shapes of settlement were provided in this question. Candidates had to identify each one and write a short three-line description of each. The performance of both sets of candidates (Paper A and Paper B) was commendable for most with 127 candidates answering correctly and obtaining high marks. For Paper B candidates 28/45 answered wrongly. A main concern with this question was that a large number of candidates did not answer this question and left it completely blank. Settlement is normally one of the favourite topics. Thirty-two candidates, 12 in paper A and 20 in paper B, were awarded no marks. The mean scores for each set of candidates was: Paper A – 4.89/6 and Paper B – 2.13

### **Question 8**

Practically all candidates answered correctly to this question on Sao Paolo. It dealt with its rapid population growth and the push factors that encourage people to leave the rural areas and the pull factors that attract people to cities. Mean scores awarded were: Paper A - 5.25/6 and Paper B - 4.18/6

### **Question 9**

The global North/South divide was the main point of this question. The overall answers were correct especially those concerned with part (a). Wrongly represented lines were those that were approximately across the equator. However most candidates were well aware of the N/S divide and included the westernized countries of Australia and New Zealand with the North. Eighty-four per cent of Paper A and 74 per cent of Paper B candidates answered correctly obtaining average marks of 2.99/4 and 1.98/4 respectively. However difficulties were encountered with some of the candidates' drawing of the N/S line that divides the industrialized North from the developing South, this was especially true for Paper B candidates.

### **Question 10**

This question dealt with acid rain: its meaning, i.e. what the term stands for, and its effect on the natural environment. Most of the answers by both sets of candidates were up to the required standard however Paper A candidates scored higher marks at 4.78/6 to 2.98/6 for Paper B candidates.

## **Paper 2A**

### **Question 1**

Most candidates were able to answer well Questions 1a and 1b and were capable to describe the allotted questions with the right geographical terms, however sometimes the answers were too vague and thus lacked the necessary detail especially with the linkages between soil formation and parent rock, climate and flora and fauna in question 1c. The figure provided in this question showed that it was helpful for the candidate however, after describing the diagram, a number of candidates failed to give further relevant detail. About over one-half of the candidates selected to answer this question (49.6%). The average mark obtained was 18.8/25.

### **Question 2**

Question 2a was answered satisfactorily. However, a few candidates confused the definition of focus with that of epicentre. Question 2c was mostly answered on a general level, without the detailed references to names of plates, plate margins and detailed case history of the Kobe earthquake. Only the candidates who scored high marks overall in this paper showed adequate knowledge regarding the case study of Kobe. With an average mark of 17.9/25 and almost three-quarters (74.1%) of the candidates choosing to answer this question it shows that the topic is a favourite one.

### **Question 3**

Overall the majority of the candidates showed good knowledge of the processes occurring in glacial areas with most candidates providing appropriate answers about freeze-thaw weathering for Question 3a and good answers for plucking and abrasion processes in Question 3b. Answers to Question 3c were varied, with a few of them not so relevant to the question. Question 3d were mostly relevant although the discussions provided were always detailed and specific. Discussing and analyzing the human activities occurring in the area were the most difficult aspect for the candidates to tackle. Another set of correct answers to this question with an average mark of 17.9/25 obtained overall and 45 per cent of candidates chose to answer this question.

### **Question 4**

Most candidates have satisfactory knowledge to answer correctly Question 4a, 4b and 4c. The performance in Question 4d was inferior to the previous three, with candidates not providing sufficient technical knowledge of the passage of fronts V and W. Overall despite being able to read the synoptic

weather chart, a number of the candidates lacked the detailed information about the passage of a depression. Almost forty-five cent of candidates chose this question obtaining an average mark of 15.2/25.

#### **Question 5**

This was a very popular question (107 candidates answering this question) with most providing relevant and detailed answers. Only a few candidates showed inadequate knowledge regarding population and settlements .In fact an average mark of 18.0/25 was awarded overall.

#### **Question 6**

This question was the least chosen from this paper (22 candidates, representing just 15.0 per cent). This may probably be due to candidates' lack of confidence in tackling this subject. The result was that this question may be considered as the one in which the candidates attempting this question provided rather weak or confusing answers. The explanations provided for Question 6a were poor or even worse, out-of-point. Candidates seemed to have difficulties in providing examples for the five types of settlements. Question b was similarly not well answered, with most candidates giving wrong answers about the definition of Primate City. The average mark obtained was 15.9/25.

#### **Question 7**

A fairly popular question (49 candidates answered this question), with relevant answers provided especially for Question 7a and Question 7c. The average mark was 15.4/7. Those who chose this question showed an adequate level of competence and knowledge about tourism. The examiners made adequate provisions for answers to 7b.

#### **Question 8**

This question on energy resources proved to be a highly popular choice by most candidates and the majority showed that they have a good grasp of this topic with detailed answers in Question 8a, and slightly more generic and concise for Question 8b.The highest average score was obtained in this question at 19.5/25 with 32 candidates answering this question.

### **Paper 2B**

#### **Question 1**

Most of the answers to Question 1a were answered correctly, although most candidates were able to answer better the question on rotation rather than that on revolution. Question 1b was also answered satisfactorily, with Question bi and bii answered better than Question 1b iii. 59.5% of candidates chose this question obtaining an average mark of 11.6/25.

#### **Question 2**

The candidates who answered this question did reasonably well, with most candidates scoring full points in Question 2b, elevating it to the highest-scoring question with an average mark of 17.1/25.

#### **Question 3**

Question 3a was answered well by most candidates. In Question 3b, most candidates were able to identify and discuss well the causes of deforestation related to specific land use developments. In Question 3c, however, many of the negative effects mentioned by the candidates related to direct ecological effects such as loss of trees, habitats and soil erosion. Very few candidates mentioned also effects such as loss of carbon sinks and more liability to global warming. The average mark scored was 15.3/25 and 76.2% of candidates attempted this question.

#### **Question 4**

Very few candidates provided an accurate annotated diagram of the five rock layers, with many confusing the sequence of the geological layers. The discussion of the origin and properties of the layers was also weak, often repetitive and/or vague. The candidates were able to outline better the two environmental problems caused by quarrying. Only seven candidates attempted this question obtaining an average mark of 14.0/25.

#### **Question 5**

Surprisingly, very few candidates could correctly distinguish between emigration and immigration. Most of the candidates wrongly attributed positive pull factors to emigration and negative push factors to immigration. Question 5b was answered better than Question 5a. The migratory patterns questioned in Question 5c, were mostly answered with a focus on the patterns of migration between Libya, Tunisia and Malta, excluding the broader picture for the rest of the Mediterranean. Thirty-one candidates tackled this question scoring on average 16.6/25 marks. Overall a commendable performance.

#### **Question 6**

Question 6a was answered well by most of the 12 candidates who answered this question. The discussion in Question 6b was mostly isolated at a general level, with few candidates drawing in specific examples of projects in South American cities. On average candidates obtained 14.5/25 with 28.5 per cent choosing to answer this question.

#### **Question 7**

One-half of the candidates answered this question. Part 7a was mostly answered with reference to places like Sliema, St Julian's and Bugibba. The answers were satisfactorily discussed, with a balance on both advantages and disadvantages. Question 7b was also answered correctly bringing the average mark to 15.9/25.

#### **Question 8**

Surprisingly, some candidates still confused the different types of energy when labeling them as renewable or non-renewable. Whilst classifying coal, natural gas and petroleum as non-renewable was straightforward to do, some candidates wrongly attributed nuclear energy as a renewable form of energy. Question 8b and 8c were answered correctly and coherently and the average mark of 16.8/25 was obtained overall making it the highest-scoring question in this paper. Seventeen candidates attempted this question.

#### **Comments: Project**

Overall the impression was a positive one with most candidates presenting projects of a standard compatible with that expected at the SEC level especially those who sat for Paper A. The average mark awarded for these candidates was 16.3/20, with eight candidates not presenting their project. Most candidates worked hard at gathering data on the field and the transformation of this data into tables, pie charts and graphs was commendable. In cases where instruments were used to measure physical elements such as temperature and wind velocity candidates seemed to have a positive skill in recording data gathered. Another positive factor overall was the overall range of topics presented as projects. Conclusions were generally in line with the field studies conducted. Twenty-two candidates who registered for Paper B did not submit their project, with 14 of these sitting for the exam and eight being absent. The overall mark for the remaining candidates was 12.6/20.

## SEC EXAMINERS' REPORT MAY 2015

A factor that needs to be addressed is that plates (photographs) need to be well-captioned and enumerated. There is also no need to have multiple plates illustrating the same feature, such as shops in a Central Business District, terraced fields with in an agricultural set-up, or many photographs as examples of erosion of the same shore platform.

**Chairperson,  
Examiners' Panel 2015**