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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Pakistan Studies (4PA1) Paper 02

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General Comments

Most candidates demonstrated an accurate knowledge and understanding of the topics examined in Paper 2. There was little evidence of candidates failing to complete the paper. Most candidates were well-prepared by their centres for the more demanding command words, assess and evaluate, and there was an improvement in the quality of some of their answers, including those to resource-based sections Q1(d), Q2(d) and Q3(c). It was noticeable that more candidates referred to the resources and used the supplied information.

Some specific specification terms still appear to be unfamiliar to a few candidates and more detail will be given in the individual question section of this report. It is worth emphasising that it is essential that candidates are familiar with key terms.

Section A

The Physical Environment

Q1a(i) and Q1(ii)

Most candidates were able to identify tectonic processes and name a resource found in the Himalayan mountains. Answers ranged from water to glacial melt water.

Q1b

There were some excellent answers which referred to the Köppen classification system. Candidates who used similar terms such as arid and desert could only be credited one mark.

Q1c

Generally, candidates showed both knowledge and a good understanding of a cause of the Western Disturbances. A few answers referred to the Southwest Monsoon which could not be credited. Some candidates described the main characteristics and did not give sufficient explanation, therefore limiting the marks which could be awarded.

Q1d

This question was well answered by candidates, the majority of whom include details such as poorly constructed houses or Pakistan's tectonic location. Some candidates, however, used the information on the map and recognised that there are several densely populated urban settlements, for example Quetta, located in the higher risk zones which would increase the probability of homes being destroyed.

Q1e

This question required candidates to explain the formation of tropical cyclones. Most answers included a recognisable cross-sectional diagram which allowed some candidates to gain credit when the written section of their account lacked focus. There were no extra marks for labels or annotations on diagrams which just repeated information given in the written section. Weaker answers tended to describe a tropical cyclone rather than to explain its formation. Expanded points, for example, the importance of locations 5° -20° north and south of the equator providing warm enough sea surface temperatures for the evaporation and uplift of water vapour, were given full credit.

Q1f

Candidates were asked to select one of the natural resources identified in the specification. There was evidence that more centres are ensuring that they teach the command word 'evaluation.' This term requires the candidate to reach a conclusion which needs to be supported with an evidence-balanced argument.

Most candidates selected either water or forest products. The impact of reservoir construction on the environment was generally well understood, and many candidates referred to well-developed named examples. Answers about forest products usually concentrated on timber production and tended to be generic. There is an expectation that, to reach level three, candidates will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specific locations in Pakistan. Those candidates who selected minerals tended to discuss coal and the related impacts on ecosystems. There some detailed answers about ground and river water pollution and the resulting loss of fish and other organisms, however, locations tended to be vague and did not relate directly to Pakistan. Very few candidates selected the environmental impacts caused by the exploitation of fish or shell fish.

Section B

The Human Environment

Q2a(i) and Q2a(ii)

At least 90% of candidates selected the correct answer to 2a(i). Many answers to 2a(ii) quoted, in full, the definition of food security published by the International Food Policy Research Institute. Although this is commendable, such answers were over-long for a one-mark question. Some candidates were unfamiliar with the term and described food hygiene.

Q2b

All candidates were able to name at least one crop grown in Pakistan. Rice and wheat were most frequently named.

Q2c

The most frequent answer given was that relying on imported energy increases Pakistan's trade deficit. The better answers then stressed that this meant that money was not available for investment in developing Pakistan's agriculture and industries, therefore severely limiting economic development.

Q2d

An increasing number of candidates referred to the resource. Their answers therefore included the erosion of soil from river banks and due to wind blowing top soil away where areas of land had not been cleared for urban development. Other candidates discussed deforestation, but often did not mention the important function of tree roots.

Q2e

The factors affecting the location of manufacturing industries were well known, and a significant number of candidates were awarded full marks for this question. Many answers included at least three well developed points covering the availability of labour, transport, power or government policies and incentives.

Q2f

This question used the command word assess. This requires candidates to consider a number of factors and give a reasoned explanation of the factor or factors felt to be the most important. Candidates were asked to assess the importance of improving transport systems for Pakistan's economic development. The higher-level answers referred to specific locations in Pakistan, for example pointing out that the lack of transport networks in Balochistan is preventing the exploitation of mineral resources, therefore having a negative impact on both regional and national development. The limited investment in the railways, and their unequal distribution were frequently made points, as the limitations caused by severe transport congestion in urban areas. In general, this was a well answered question, and an increased percentage of candidates included some form of assessment.

Section C

Challenges for Pakistan

Q3a(i) and 3a(ii)

The majority of candidates were able to answer both of these questions, based on a graph of changing sea level height at Karachi, correctly.

Q3a(iii)

This section required candidates to identify two local methods of adapting to climate change in Karachi. A variety of answers such as planting trees for shade and raising awareness were seen. However, methods such as large-scale reforestation and changing agricultural production could not be credited.

Q3b

Glacial ablation and the resulting implications for agricultural production was understood by most candidates, who recognised that flooding would reduce farming output. Some candidates made the valid point that increased river discharge and flooding would mean that flood plains became covered in fertile deposits, increasing agricultural output over time.

Q3c

Nearly all the answers showed that the candidates had recognised that the resource showed that a decrease in the number of live births in Pakistan. The implications for this ranged from improved education as the money allocated had to be divided amongst fewer children to reduced populations in rural areas leading to improved employment prospects and less migration to urban areas.

Q3d

This question required candidates to explain the strategies to support rural communities. There were some detailed, high-level answers which discussed incentives such as the Pakistan Off-grid lighting Programme which provides solar powered lanterns to people who do not have mains electricity, and the Ehsaas Programme which helps, among others, poor farmers, and the aim of which is to reduce regional and national inequality. Some candidates were aware of several incentives, but described these rather than providing explanations, therefore limiting the marks which could be awarded.

Q3e

The final question in the paper required candidates to evaluate the opportunities and challenges of living in large cities. This was the second time that the command word evaluate was used in this paper, but it is worth stressing that this requires candidates to reach a conclusion which needs to be supported with an evidence-balanced argument.

In general, this was well answered with candidates demonstrating both knowledge and understanding of the problems and advantages of city living. Most answers referred to one or more urban areas, generic answers, especially if they lacked evaluation, were unlikely to reach level three. Karachi was frequently selected, and problems including the high percentage of poorly built houses, insufficient water and electricity supplies and the lack of health care were contrasted with the availability of work, recreation and entertainment in the 'city of lights'.

