

# Assessment Guide for A level Geography Paper 1 and Paper 2



## A Level Geography

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Geography (9GE0)

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## Introduction

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This guide is designed to support students and their teachers and to help them understand the examination requirements for A level Geography, Paper 1 and Paper 2.

It contains information and advice on:

1. The length of each examination and their weightings within the GCE qualification as a whole.
2. The structure of each of the two question papers, and how this changes from one examination series to another.
3. Information on question styles, command words and marking
4. Some exemplar student responses to extended response questions from the published Specimen Papers, with commentaries and indicated mark scheme level.

## 1. The exam structure

- The GCE Geography course consists of three externally-examined papers and an Independent Investigation marked internally and moderated externally.
- In Paper 1 Section A both questions are compulsory. Section B has two questions – students choose either Question 2 or Question 3. Section C is compulsory.
- In Paper 2, Section A has two questions, both compulsory, Section B has two questions – students chose between either Question 3 or Question 4, Section C also comprises two questions – students choose between Question 5 and Question 6.
- Paper 3 is a synoptic investigation; the paper is divided into three sections with all parts and all questions compulsory.
- The exam structure for the whole qualification is shown in Table 1 below:

Paper	Content Coverage
<b>Paper 1</b> <b>105 marks</b> <b>30% of total</b> <b>2hrs 15 mins</b>	<b>Section A (16 marks)</b> Tectonic processes and hazards (Question 1)  <b>Section B (40 marks)</b> Either – Glaciated landscapes and change (Question 2) Or – Coastal landscapes and change (Question 3)  <b>Section C (49 marks)</b> The water cycle and water insecurity and The carbon cycle and energy security (Question 4)
<b>Paper 2</b> <b>105 marks</b> <b>30% of total</b> <b>2hrs 15 mins</b>	<b>Section A (32 marks)</b> Globalisation and Superpowers (Question 1 and Question 2)  <b>Section B (35 marks)</b> Either – Regenerating places (Question 3) Or – Diverse places (Question 4)  <b>Section C (38 marks)</b> Either – Health, Human Rights and Intervention (Question 5) Or – Migration, Identity and Sovereignty (Question 6)
<b>Paper 3</b> <b>20%</b> <b>70 marks</b> <b>2 hrs 15 minutes</b>	Synoptic investigation of an issue that stems from compulsory content.
<b>NEA</b> <b>20%</b> <b>70 marks</b>	Independent investigation related to the student’s choice of subject content

**Table 1**

A variety of different question types will be used within all examinations both to assess a range of requirements across different AO’s (Assessment Objectives) but also to facilitate differentiation.

## Assessment Guide for A level Geography Paper 1 and Paper 2

The different questions types that are used are:

- **Geographical skills:** These are three 4 mark questions that test either or both qualitative and quantitative skills, sometimes in two parts – one in each paper.
- **Short open response:** A short paragraph to answer either a 3 mark stimulus based question or a short paragraph for 4 marks – these are in Section C in Paper 1 and all three sections on Paper 2
- **Extended open response:** Where students are required to develop extended written arguments and to draw well-evidenced and informed conclusions about geographical questions and issues. These questions range from mini-essays worth 6 marks to a 24-mark essay in Paper 3

There is ramped demand within sections on Papers 1 and 2. The ramping on Paper 3 is across the whole paper culminating in a 24-mark question.

The mark tariff and AO (Assessment Objective) focus for extended responses question types varies across the components as outlined in Table 2 below:

Component	Extended open response questions	Command Word	Assessment Objectives
<b>Paper 1: Section A</b>	X1 12-mark essay	Assess	A01= 3 A02=9
<b>Paper 1: Section B</b>	X2 6-mark essays* X1 8-mark essay X1 20- mark essay	Explain Explain Evaluate	A01=3 A02=3 A01=8 A01=5 A02=15
<b>Paper 1: Section C</b>	X1 6-mark essay* X1 8-mark essay X1 12-mark essay X1 20-mark essay	Explain Explain Assess Evaluate	A01= 6 A01=8 A01= 3 A02=9 A01=5 A02=15
<b>Paper 2: Section A</b>	X2 12-mark essays	Assess	A01=3 A02=9
<b>Paper 2: Section B</b>	X2 6-mark essays* X1 20-mark essay	Explain Evaluate	A01=3 A02=3 A01=5 A02=15
<b>Paper 2: Section C</b>	X1 6-mark essay* X1 8-mark essay X1 20-mark essay	Explain Explain Evaluate	A01=3 A02=3 A01=8 A01=5 A02=15
<b>Paper 3: All parts</b>	X2 8-mark essays X1 18-mark essay X1 24-mark essay	Analyse Evaluate Evaluate	A01=4 A03=4 A01=3,A02=9,A03=6 A01=4.A02=12,A03=8

**Table 2**

\*One of the three six-mark questions on Paper 1 and Paper 2 will be knowledge based only, where the allocation will be 6 A01 marks

## 2. Question types and command words

Command words are used consistently in our A level Geography examinations to assess particular skills, making it clear the type of response that's needed. Table 3 lists the command words that could be used in the examinations for this qualification and their definitions. These command words will stay the same for the lifetime of the qualification.

Command Word	Definition
<b>Suggest</b>	For an unfamiliar scenario, provide a reasoned explanation of how and why something may occur. A suggested explanation requires a justification/exemplification of a point that has been identified.
<b>Draw/Plot and Complete</b>	Create a graphical representation of geographical information. Often used in conjunction with 'Complete' as in 'Complete the table by plotting..'
<b>Calculate</b>	Produce a numerical answer, showing relevant working.
<b>Analyse</b>	Use geographical skills to investigate an issue by systematically breaking it down into individual components and making logical, evidence-based connections on the causes and effects or interrelationships between the components.
<b>Explain</b>	Provide a reasoned explanation of how or why something occurs. An explanation requires a justification/exemplification of a point. Some questions will require the use of annotated diagrams to support explanation.
<b>Assess</b>	Use evidence to determine the relative significance of something. Give consideration to all factors and identify which are the most important.
<b>Evaluate</b>	Measure the value or success of something and ultimately provide a substantiated judgement/conclusion. Review information and then bring it together to form a conclusion, drawing on evidence such as strengths, weaknesses, alternatives and relevant data.

**Table 3**

Table 4 shows the mark tariffs for different command words across the three papers. The Paper 3 commands are shown with a red star \*

	3	4	6	8	12	18	20	24
<b>Suggest</b>	*		*					
<b>Plot/Draw /Complete</b>		*						
<b>Calculate</b>		*						
<b>Explain</b>		*	*	*				
<b>Analyse</b>				*				
<b>Assess</b>					*			
<b>Evaluate</b>						*	*	*

**Table 4**

### **Command words – common errors**

It is not uncommon for students to confuse the meanings and demands of different command words; the following section identifies some of the more frequent errors

#### **'Assess' and 'Evaluate'**

- 'Assess' is used for extended writing questions in which the student is required to use evidence from located examples or a case study to determine the relative significance of something. This is done by considering all the factors and identifying which are the most important; for example, the relative impact of two things or the extent to which something happens in different circumstances. 'Assess' does **not** require a conclusion although 'Assess the importance of...' or 'Assess the relative importance of...' might lead students to a clear conclusion.
- 'Evaluate' is used for extended writing questions in which the student must appraise things by measuring the value or success of something and ultimately **come to a substantiated judgement/conclusion**. This is done by analysing and reviewing information and then bringing it together to develop a definitive conclusion, substantiated by drawing on evidence such as advantages, disadvantages, strengths, weaknesses, alternatives and relevant data / details from located examples and/or a case study. In other words, the student will come 'to a view' and offer evidence to support that 'view'. Evaluation will be judgmental but not necessarily unequivocal. Recognising that there is always a counter-argument available is an important part of evaluation. Please see the exemplar answers at the end of this guide for further guidance on this.

#### **Analyse – a note**

- Although only used as a command word for Paper 3, nonetheless in some 6-mark 'Explain' questions, 12-mark 'Assess' questions or 20-mark 'Evaluate' questions students are offered resources and asked to 'Study' or 'Use' information from the Resource Booklet, which is in each case, unfamiliar to them. This instruction to 'Study' is an instruction to extract information from these resources which they can then interpret using their understanding of the topic.

### 3. Tackling the extended response questions

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#### Four strategies that students might use when answering questions

##### 1. Use of reflective language

A useful strategy to help students can get to grips with the demands of 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' questions is to use evaluative language in answers; when a student does this, it shows that they are considering different perspectives, arguments and positions:

Therefore Yet  
Alternatively  
However Significantly  
Importantly Concluding  
Overall Although  
Similarly  
Whereas

##### 2. Constructing an argument

The 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' commands are an invitation for students to offer an argument which, in the case of 'Assess...' does not need to come to a definitive conclusion whereas 'Evaluate...' requires them to do so.

Students should approach these types of question by:

- Committing to a particular view before embarking on their answer, either an overview in the case of 'Evaluate' questions or on-going assessment in 'Assess' questions. Evaluate questions will almost always require students to make a choice about a proposition and some of the best responses clarify that from the outset whilst others make a case and draw a definitive conclusion in the final paragraph. Please see the exemplar answers at the end of this guide.
- Accept, and offer evidence that almost all arguments will have some strengths but also some weaknesses.
- Recognise that short-term costs may be offset by long-term benefits or, more often perhaps, vice-versa.
- Recognise, and offer evidence, that the costs and benefits of any option will fall unevenly both geographically and over time. There will, in other words, be 'winners' and 'losers' and the most successful answers will focus on that.
- Seeing that almost all 'big' decisions are ultimately made by governments and others require the compliance of those governments, so students need to understand the varied relationship between the different players; governments, organisations and groups of people and the impact of these decisions upon the environment.
- Avoiding simplistic statements that suggest that consensus exists where it clearly doesn't as in 'Britain agrees' or 'globalisation is good for the country'.



- Coming to a 'view' at the end of an essay.

### 3. PEEEL

To avoid the problem of students merely writing everything they know in the form of a description, they need to practise explanatory sentences, supporting their statements with evidence and linking back to the question.

PEEEL (Point, Explanation, Evidence, Evaluation and Link) sentence starters are a useful way to focus students and structure their responses to extended writing questions more effectively:

Point	Explanation	Evidence	Evaluation	Link
It has been suggested that...	The reasons why include..	Figure X clearly offers some evidence for this ...	However, in other environments both now and in the past..	With this in mind, it is evident that..
It is believed that...	This suggests that the processes involved include...	This is supported by the example of...	Nonetheless, there always room for doubt over processes that cannot be directly observed.	Therefore, it is evident that ...
Some people argue that...	It is clear from this that there is a counter argument...	This is demonstrated by what has taken place in ...	Despite this, the general view remains that..	All of this evidence demonstrates ...
Many people believe that...	This evidence is strongly supportive of the view...	Figure X suggests some confusion of attitudes ...	The evidence is not conclusive because much of it is anecdotal and challenged by other players	This also links to the idea that ...
One argument that...	This means that ...	The coastal landscape of Dorset illustrates this	The costs of coastal defences may not always be offset by its benefits	This is what might be expected because ...
One school of thought is that ...	This supports the argument because ...	The evidence from unconventional oil such as tar sands is...	Obviously, this is disputed and very much driven by self-interest for some groups.	It is clear that there are strong arguments ...
One of the main causes/advantages ...	This demonstrates that ...	The pattern on Figure X suggests ...	It needs to be recalled that the evidence is disputed. TNCs are varied and their environmental records also vary.	Therefore, although the evidence if not definitive we can conclude that ...

#### 4. Moving on from clichés – qualification and complexity

Broadly speaking the AO descriptors (please see Section 4 of this guide) can be 'translated' into levels of complexity in student responses. An example is given here of how we might assess an answer to the question 'Assess the relationship between the magnitude of tectonic events and their impact on people'.

1. Clichés have their place – for example; the answers to a question exploring the relationship between the magnitude of a tectonic event and its impact on people might reasonably point out that the damage to people as measured by loss of life and injury is generally greatest in the less developed world. Students might offer AO1 evidence for this in varying levels of detail.
2. However, this cliché can be qualified because there are exceptional events that kill many people in the developed world (e.g. the Japanese tsunami event (Tohoku) of 2011) and a large-scale event in southern Italy or Yellowstone National Park in the USA would result in very considerable loss of life. A more sophisticated qualification might also make reference to an event such as the L'Aquila earthquake of 2009 in which the loss of life was relatively high given the level of development of Italy.
3. The most impressive answers will often add a further layer of complexity by, for example, deconstructing the word 'people' pointing out that it is poor people, women and the elderly who are more likely to die in tectonic disasters than other groups because of corruption, poor governance and systemic failures. Another useful route to pursue would be the internal inequalities in many countries including the most developed such as Italy that make average GDP data so unreliable; this would help add complexity to the use of an example such as the L'Aquila earthquake of 2009.

Recognising the importance of these qualifications and adding complexity is a very useful route to improving extended answers.

## 4. Marking the extended response questions

All extended response questions are marked using a **levels-based mark scheme (LBMS)** rather than point-marking. Our level-based mark schemes are explicit about the type of response and skills required. Level descriptors are classified as distinct 'traits' and so you can see how individual traits progress across levels. There's a consistent approach across questions that test the same assessment objectives (AO) and comparable qualities, so you and your students can focus on the geographical skills and understanding rather than mechanics of individual questions. Please see Table 5 for further guidance.

Levels based mark schemes have two sections:

- **indicative content** that reflects specific points that a student might make under the relevant assessment objective when answering that particular question. At the top of the indicative content section, the AO weightings must be included.
- **level descriptors** that articulate the AO related skills that a student is expected to show when answering the question – these level descriptors will not change over the life of the specification,

Question number	Indicative content	
2*(f)	<b>AO2 (4 marks)/AO3 (4 marks)</b>	
	<b>AO2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid economic change will involve both changes to the structure of the economy and changes to its regional geography, as well as a growing GDP.</li> <li>• Rural-urban migration is a consequence of the changing structure of the economy.</li> <li>• There are significant changes to the population data as a consequence of these changes being unevenly spread across society.</li> <li>• In many emerging economies there have been rising inequalities of income.</li> <li>• Impacts will be both positive and negative, with some groups benefiting both economically and socially but others not, especially the urban poor and landless rural populations.</li> <li>• Environmental impacts also affect human health unevenly.</li> </ul>	
	<b>AO3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In many emerging societies a powerful elite run the country and have profited from its development and from their relationship with both foreign governments and foreign TNCs.</li> <li>• Improvements in infrastructure and higher government spending have improved levels of health and education for this group and an emerging middle class, often in the major cities.</li> <li>• There are clearly rural groups who are not currently benefiting from rapid economic change because they lose their land as agriculture becomes more commercial.</li> <li>• Urban economies provide only a limited number of relatively well-paid industrial jobs so many new city dwellers are forced into the informal economy.</li> <li>• As a result, high rates of mortality are common in both squatter settlements and shanty towns, and in rural communities.</li> <li>• Long-term development might lead to the increased growth of a middle class with benefits spreading more widely as a consequence.</li> </ul>	
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No acceptable response
Level 1	1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates isolated elements of understanding of concepts and the interrelationship of places, environments and processes. (AO2)</li> <li>• Attempts to apply understanding to deconstruct information but understanding and connections are flawed. An unbalanced or incomplete argument that provides limited synthesis of understanding. Judgements are supported by limited evidence. (AO3)</li> </ul>
Level 2	4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates elements of understanding of concepts and the interrelationship of places, environments and processes. (AO2)</li> <li>• Applies understanding to deconstruct information and provide some logical connections between concepts. An imbalanced argument that synthesises mostly relevant understanding but not entirely coherently, leading to judgements that are supported by evidence occasionally. (AO3)</li> </ul>
Level 3	7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates accurate understanding of concepts and the interrelationship of places, environments and processes. (AO2)</li> <li>• Applies understanding to deconstruct information and provide logical connections between concepts throughout. A balanced, well-developed argument that synthesises relevant understanding coherently, leading to judgements that are supported by evidence throughout. (AO3)</li> </ul>

Indicative content under AO headings

AO weighting

Level descriptors

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Please use Table 5 below in conjunction with [Specimen Paper 1](#) and its accompanying mark scheme. Key differences between the levels descriptors have been emboldened.

<b>Assessment Objectives</b>	<b>How could a Level 2 answer demonstrate this?</b>	<b>How could a Level 3 answer demonstrate this (what might they add?)</b>
<p><b>AO1</b></p> <p>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of places environments, concepts, processes, interactions and change at a variety of scales</p>	<p>Question 4c from Paper 1 'Explain why energy pathways are prone to disruption' (AO1 8 marks)</p> <p>A level 2 answer would demonstrate geographical knowledge and understanding which is <b>mostly relevant</b> and may include some inaccuracies and show an understanding that addresses <b>a range</b> of geographical ideas, which are <b>not fully</b> detailed and/or developed.</p> <p>Typically these answers lack specific detail of place or process and include little complexity.</p> <p>An answer that offered generalised information such as 'pipelines are always vulnerable to especially when they pass through war zones' and 'there is a real debate in America about pipelines from Canada' is typically level 2.</p>	<p>Question 4c from Paper 1 'Explain why energy pathways are prone to disruption' (AO1 8 marks)</p> <p>A level 3 answer would show <b>'relevant'</b> knowledge and understanding 'throughout' and offer a <b>'broad range'</b> of geographical ideas <b>which would be both</b> detailed and developed.</p> <p>Typically these Level 3 answers show some complexity and better detail in the evidence</p> <p>Level 3 response would have both more detail 'the planned Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline has been delayed because of regional conflict now complicated by Iran coming under pressure from the US' and 'the Keystone pipeline taking oil from Canada to Texas in the US faces serious opposition from environmental groups'</p>
<p><b>AO2</b></p> <p>Apply knowledge and understanding in different contexts to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues.</p>	<p>Question 4d from Paper 1 – Assess the likely impact of changing precipitation on the hydrological processes in the drainage basin shown. (AO1 3 marks, AO2 9 marks)</p> <p>AO2 criteria for Level 2 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies knowledge and understanding of</li> </ul>	<p>Question 4d from Paper 1 – Assess the likely impact of changing precipitation on the hydrological processes in the drainage basin shown. (AO1 3 marks, AO2 9 marks)</p> <p>AO2 criteria for Level 3 are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies knowledge and understanding of</li> </ul>

	<p>geographical information/ideas logically, making <b>some relevant</b> connections/relationships. (AO2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies knowledge and understanding of geographical information/ideas to produce a <b>partial but coherent interpretation that is mostly relevant</b> and supported by evidence. (AO2)</li> <li>• Applies knowledge and understanding of geographical information/ideas to make judgements about the significance of <b>some factors, to produce an argument that may be unbalanced or partially coherent.</b> (AO2)</li> </ul> <p>Level 2 answers will have assessment and they will be focussed on the question (unlike Level 1 answers) despite drifting into story-telling too often thus offering partial and not entirely coherent assessment. Not all judgments will 'follow' from the points made and arguments will frequently be asserted rather than fully evidenced. In other words although the 'P' of the PEEEL is comparable with a Level 3 'P' there are shortcomings with the quality of the evidence and the assessment/evaluation.</p>	<p>geographical information/ideas logically, <b>making relevant</b> connections/relationships. (AO2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies knowledge and understanding of geographical information/ideas to produce a <b>full and coherent interpretation</b> that is relevant and supported by evidence. (AO2)</li> <li>• Applies knowledge and understanding of geographical information/ideas to make <b>supported judgements about the significance of factors throughout the response, leading to a balanced and coherent argument.</b> (AO2)</li> </ul> <p>Level 3 responses are better focussed on the title and will deconstruct most, although not necessarily all, of the key terms. Evidence is tied more tightly to the question asked which is also referenced, especially at the end of paragraphs. For AO2 it is the focus on the title that is critical in extended writing answers. In other words both the explanations of the processes are stronger than Level 2 as is the supporting evidence it is critical that both the 'EE's of PEEEL are supported by the final evaluation (E) and the link</p>
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## Assessment Guide for A level Geography Paper 1 and Paper 2

		(L) back to the title that will follow.
<b>AO3</b>		
<p>Use a variety of relevant quantitative, qualitative and fieldwork skills to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>investigate geographical questions and issues</li> <li>interpret, analyse and evaluate data and evidence</li> <li>construct arguments and draw conclusions</li> </ul>	<p>AO3 is only rewarded in two places on Paper 1 and Paper 2 so it is not covered in detail here. The two questions where it is tested are the geographical skills questions which are found in Section A of Paper 1 and in either Section A or Section C of Paper 2.</p>	

**Table 5**

It is important that students have a chance to look at the **levels descriptors** in the [Sample Assessment Materials \(SAMs\)](#), or Specimen Papers, and are familiar with their demands and the language used in them:

There are a number of misconceptions about levels-based marking that are useful for centres and their candidates to understand.

1. There are no 'hidden hurdles' or 'golden tickets' in levels-based mark schemes. Examiners select whichever levels descriptors best fit the answer in front of them. Answers may not meet all the criteria in one level but, nonetheless, be best placed in that level. Similarly, an answer that, for example, contains material that satisfies one aspect of, for example, a Level 3 response will not automatically be placed in that level in other aspects of the response do not meet the other criteria.
2. Although the mark schemes divide marks between different AO's - these are not then point marked within the AO categories. In other words, making five different points is not the same as satisfying the level descriptor, which will remain constant for the life of the specification.
3. The Indicative content of each levels-based mark scheme is not a definitive list of everything that candidates might offer but simply an 'indication' of the material that they might offer. Some excellent responses may include little or nothing of the published indicative content. This element of the mark scheme is often amended during the pre-standardisation and standardisation meetings when actual candidate responses have been discussed. It is also important to note that the language used throughout the mark schemes will not necessarily be that expected from candidate

## 5. Examiner marked exemplars with commentaries

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### IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Each of the exemplars are responses to questions on the Specimen Papers that can be accessed on the Pearson [website](#).
- The responses were written in a variety of situations in a variety of centres, both as end of topic tests and as a part of longer 'mock' examinations.
- In the case of those answers being a part of a 'mock' paper it is not known if the student's time management allowed them to complete the paper.
- Although initially marked internally, the marks have been subsequently amended or agreed by senior examiners.
- Obviously enough none of the students had completed the GCE course when producing these answers; some were in Year 12 at the time of writing.
- All responses have been typed from original hand-written responses – spelling has been corrected and grammar adjusted to clarify meaning where necessary.
- Examiner comments are to be found at the end of every paragraph *in italics*.

**Foreword**

These student essays were originally hand written rather than typed and where necessary spelling and serious grammar errors have been corrected to aid comprehension. There are six example essays in total – three from Paper 1, each from a compulsory section and three from Paper 2 – one from a compulsory section (Q2 b) and one from the optional Q5 and Q6; specifically Q5 d and Q6 d.

They are mostly top-level essays although not always scoring full-marks. There are obviously areas for improvement in all six and it needs to be remembered that even essays that score full marks will still be flawed, but it is worth repeating the mark schemes are positive and 18-year-old students performing under pressure in an exam hall cannot be expected to produce faultless work.

What they have in common is a good basic structure with, in almost all cases, clear introductions, a coherent paragraph structure and evaluative final paragraphs that try to pull the arguments together into a meaningful conclusion.

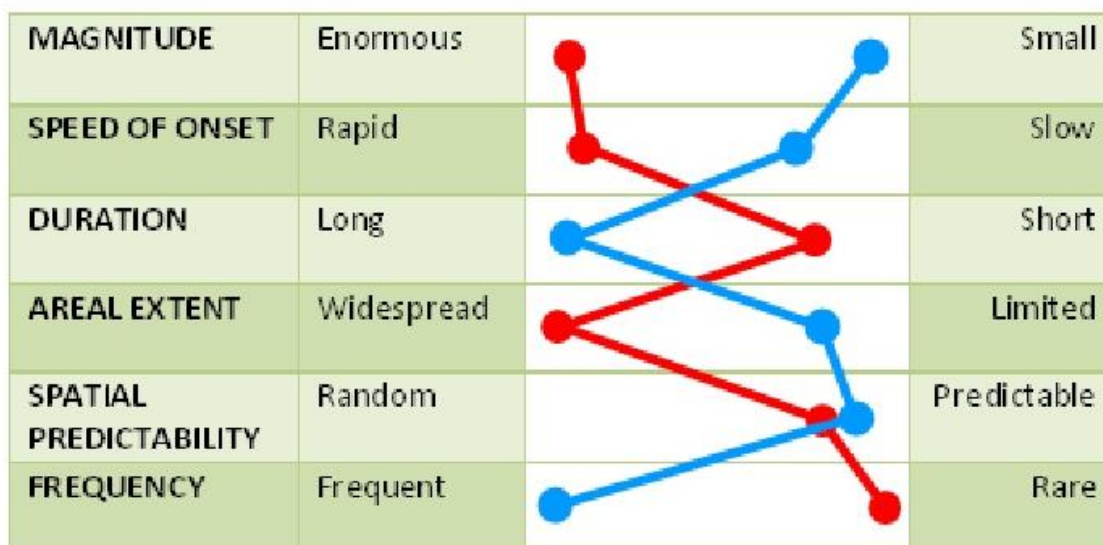
There are examiner comments at the end of each paragraph, the final one of which will also summarise the overall judgment of the essay.

**Paper 1 examples**

**Topic 1 Tectonic Processes and Hazards**

**Question 1 (b) – Assess the importance of tectonic hazard profiles in understanding the severity of impacts resulting from earthquake events (12) (AO1 = 3, AO2 = 9)**

Hazard profiles are a qualitative technique for comparing different hazards. An example of this is a comparison between the earthquakes in Iceland in 2014 (on the right) and the Asian tsunami (on the left). There are other types of hazard profile that include different categories such as recovery rate and damage costs. This makes them less effective because the categories are not fixed and it is really quite subjective to judge something as being enormous or large. Much of that depends of an opinion that might depend on all sorts of cultural factors.



*A thoughtful first paragraph that recognises the potential fallibility of this type of technique*

If we take this example obviously magnitude is dominant. The largest events almost always have a hugely important impact as did the earthquake that caused a tsunami in Japan in 2011



(9.1 on the MME scale). Even the highly developed country of Japan was unable to prevent a high loss of life (over 20 000) whereas Icelandic earthquakes have killed no-one because of their lower magnitudes.

*This paragraph leaves the final sentence unresolved which is then picked up in the following paragraph. A quick plan might have avoided this slightly clumsy structure. The student does import some local knowledge although is unsurprisingly coy about naming the Icelandic event.*

However, it isn't that simple because there are very few people living in Iceland and even really large earthquakes would kill very few people or damage much property because of that. It isn't obvious how speed of onset makes all that much difference. All earthquakes are instant events that last a few minutes at most, with no warning ever. The tsunami that followed in Japan in 2011 and in Indonesia in 2004 did have a bit of warning but the impact is much more to do with population densities and what is called vulnerability than it is the profile of that hazard.

*There are sensible comments here although the student might have commented that hazard profiles are not designed with earthquakes specifically in mind so some of the 'categories' might be of more value elsewhere, for example volcanic eruptions.*

Another aspect that isn't clear is the longer term and longer distance impact of some events. Severity of impacts can be measured in several different ways but the profile doesn't really cover that. So the Japanese tsunami caused a cut back in the Honda factory in Swindon because of shortage of parts and led to a complete change in Japanese energy policy as the Fukuyama nuclear plant closed down. Since that Japan has debated the future of nuclear power recently deciding to go ahead with it despite Fukuyama. This shows that hazard profiles do not always help us understand how some hazards are more disastrous than others.

*There is good AO1 here in that the case-study detail is sufficient for all 3 available marks. But the AO2 'argument' just stops. There are interesting comments about areal extent with respect to the Japanese 2011 event but it is only the final sentence that tries to pull it together. Thus, although this is a Level 3 response it is not at the top of the level because of the weakness in the final AO2 criteria – it doesn't effectively 'lead to a balanced and coherent argument'. It was awarded 10 marks.*

## Topic 5 The Water Cycle and Water Insecurity

### Question 4d – Study Figure 4b Assess the likely impacts of changing precipitation on the hydrological processes in the drainage basins shown. (12) (AO1 = 3, AO2 = 9)

It is important to state that these are predicted changes which may be wrong. Much of the science is based on the idea that what has happened before can be extended into the future. So, maps such as this one need to be treated with a bit of suspicion. There are three river basins shown here with the Amazon being the largest being nearly the same area as the USA followed by the Mississippi and the Yukon basin in Alaska/Canada.

*This is a very strong opening paragraph with a welcome scepticism shown about the data and the geographic context of the basins established. In the 12 mark 'Assess' essays not too long should be spent on introducing key terms – more of a sprint than a marathon.*

The data here suggests that two basins in North America will have generally higher precipitation. In the Yukon this is likely to be snowfall whilst in the Mississippi this is probably a mixture of rainfall and snowfall. If there is more precipitation, there will be higher river discharge and more flood risk as a result. The map shows relatively little change for the Mississippi which is already a very heavily managed river basin. What we don't know is whether changing climate also includes increasing rising temperatures which would increase evaporation rates too which might lead to no real change in the discharge of the river. Another factor is when the rainfall increase takes place. If it happens in the summer the rate of evaporation might be higher, and the river is less likely to flood. In the Yukon the increase is much higher and because this is likely to be snow it will increase hugely the discharge in the spring which might change flooding in the summer.

*There is knowledge here that is not necessarily 'expected'. There is no prescription of case-studies here so the accurate knowledge about the hydrology of the Yukon and the Mississippi is very good. One might expect students to make a distinction between a drainage basin of an Arctic river with one debouching into the Gulf of Mexico, but the information on management is very strong as is the comment about temperature changes.*

Things are very different in the Amazon where some areas are predicted to have a 50% decrease in precipitation. That would not only change the river discharge, but it will also change the whole biome which will then feedback on the amount of rain that hits the ground and the various things that happen after that about infiltration rates, runoff and river discharge. It isn't just about the changes caused by changing precipitation but about the changes that this causes.

*Again, a very thoughtful paragraph with another extension into one thing creating another through feedback mechanisms.*

So to conclude it isn't easy to guess what might happen. There will be differences within these large drainage basins which will affect the hydrological processes but the most important thing to remember is that these changes will lead to further changes which will, in turn, lead to other changes. That makes the likely impacts hard to predict with some short-term impacts changing in the long-term.

*A sound conclusion and a very good piece of work. Examiners particularly liked the willingness of this student to 'take on' the title and to offer so many good feedback loops in the evidence and evaluation. AO1 is marked at 3/3 fully meeting the criteria of 'accurate and relevant' knowledge and understanding. It also achieved full marks in AO2 satisfying each of the three criteria. It is a good example of an answer that recognises the complexity of the processes so was given 12 marks.*

**Question 4 (e) – Evaluate the view that some approaches to managing water insecurity are more sustainable than others. (20) (A01= 5, A02 = 15)**

For many people water insecurity is one of the greatest threats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The basic causes are both rising demand because of population growth and increased wealth but also supply issues. These problems increase water insecurity and can lead to important political tensions. A classic case-study is when rivers cross national borders so that actions in one country affect supply in another leading to potential conflict. Examples of this are both the Nile and the Mekong rivers. In this essay I will use case-study evidence to show how some approaches are more sustainable than others.

*A decent opening paragraph that establishes context although there is no need to establish a 'menu' and neither sustainability nor water insecurity are defined although the former is inferred.*

However, it is important to recognise that sustainability is a highly contested term. It is composed of two parts. The first, better known part, is all about inter-generational equity saying that the present generation should not act in such a way to stop future generations meeting their needs. The second part that was part of the original Brundtland definition is about intra-generational fairness, stressing the need for tackling poverty today as 'the main priority'. This calls into question projects such as recycling and conservation unless they can be shown to help the poor today.

*So this is like an introductory paragraph and takes a very sophisticated and quite unusual view of sustainability – the final point is left rather 'hanging' but it works as an idea.*

A big part of the problem of supply is not really that there isn't enough water globally with only 50% of supply being used but that the population is growing rapidly in regions which have water shortages. Europe has little or no water insecurity because rainfall levels are generally more than enough to meet demand and in general the rich OECD countries have few problems of water insecurity. There are a few exceptions of course which I will discuss later – for example the south-west of the USA. Management is often quite limited and restricted to controlling demand during occasional periods of drought resulting from low rainfall.

*Good geographical context is provided here and management has a mention too, albeit slightly in passing.*

There are both human and physical causes of water insecurity and as a result there are management strategies that address both of these sets of causes. At a global level the Paris accord has attempted to put in place limits on greenhouse gas emissions which will help slow down anthropogenic global warming which has led to significant changes in rainfall of which Australian drought and changing El Niño events are prime examples. However, this may not be sustainable especially since the USA has threatened to withdraw from this agreement. Historically large dams were seen as a major management strategy to tackle local water shortages. Starting with the TVA in the USA in the 1930's these projects reached something of a peak with the Three-Gorges Dam in China and is also a key part of China's North-South transfer project. These projects are often very expensive and inevitably have quite a short life-

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span. An example of this is the Aswan High Dam in Egypt which has trapped huge amounts of Nile sediments and caused enormous problems with water tables falling in the Nile valley. It has also starved the Nile delta of sediment which causes problems. As with many mega-projects there are both winners and losers and the lack of sustainability is obvious. It cannot last forever and it causes poverty for some (e.g. farmers in the Nile Valley) whilst making others richer (e.g. irrigation in the Aswan region).

*A chunky paragraph that would have been better split into two parts. The winners/losers point is important and thoughtful and, although the examples lack data, they are fit for purpose.*

Another unsustainable method is to promote desalination but that is just jumping from one problem to another. This is because desalination requires vast amounts of energy which might seem to be OK in cheap energy regions except that even here it creates greenhouse gases making it unsustainable. This happens both in the USA but obviously in places like Dubai, which has no water at all and Singapore which has sustainable management policies to recycle water (NEWater) but also is increasing its capacity to desalinate sea-water. This is a common contradiction so in Las Vegas which is a very hot climate it also has dozens of golf courses which need watering. Las Vegas takes some of this water from further north in Nevada which is making farms in that area unproductive. The same sort of contradiction happens on the Great Plains where the Ogallala aquifer is being drained to produce crops such as corn which is used to feed cattle in massive feedlots as well as producing biofuels. In every way this is not sustainable because the aquifer will dry up in the next 50 years and the region will have to be abandoned.

*Shame there is no evaluative punchline linking back to the title here to this but, otherwise, this is another very strong paragraph with a good understanding of the contradictions of water management in the south-west and mid-west USA.*

There are more sustainable methods but they tend to be quite small scale, so although there are locally successful projects such as village projects in India the amount of water they save is very small compared with all the waste that goes on elsewhere. The global problem is getting worse and without a global approach there is little chance of sustainable solutions being achieved. One problem is that big business operates in the short-term and doesn't really have any way of mapping in the long-term issues that are the main part of sustainable development. So, to conclude all the dominant forms of 'water management' are unsustainable and, as a result, we will not manage water insecurity successfully.

*Possible the weakest paragraph of the essay and although the 'direction of travel' of the essay is clear enough throughout the student has introduced a couple of new ideas about business models and small-scale projects. Generally, conclusions should pull together arguments rather than introduce novel ideas. It would, for example, have been more valuable if the student had been more explicit in their use of the words in the question; for example; 'some' and 'more sustainable than others'. Nonetheless a strongly argued account that satisfies all four Level 4 criteria. There is no argument about the AO1 detail; that comfortably satisfies the AO descriptor of 'accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding throughout' but it isn't quite as strong when assessed for its AO2 coverage. The weakest element here being the fourth bullet where 'drawn together coherently' is questionable. It was awarded 18 marks.*

**Paper 2 examples**

**Topic 7 Superpowers**

**Question 2(b) Assess the extent to which emerging countries need both 'hard' and 'soft' power to extend their global influence. (12 marks) (AO1 = 3, AO2 = 9)**

Joseph Nye invented the term 'soft' power but before that, there had always been methods used by more powerful, larger countries to extend their influence in smaller less powerful countries, without actually invading them. These terms include 'diplomacy' or 'economic colonialism'. For Nye, 'soft power is the ability to attract and persuade, rather than by force (hard power), which is using the military as a means of persuasion. Soft power is the ability to influence the policies of others through appeal and attraction. There are many aspects to this of which the best known are the use of culture and economic aid to extend influence.

*This is a very strong definitional opening paragraph. The detail on soft power is excellent.*

It is important to say that hard power is not really an option for the emerging powers, even the biggest of them, China. That is because the USA spends so much more on its military than anyone else so there is only one military superpower. All of the BRIC countries are nuclear powers which is relatively cheap way of asserting some hard power if only as a defensive position and to give them a seat in the Security Council which massively helps their global influence. Other emerging countries are much more marginalised and have no real choice but to use soft power.

*The second paragraph has very good AO1 knowledge with thoughtful AO2 application too; for example the commentary about nuclear power.*

China is the most obvious economic competitor to the USA and it is important to say that using hard and soft power is almost always about extending economic power. The USA has a poor reputation in some parts of the world being militarily aggressive which leaves the door open for countries such as China and India to extend their influence. This is hard for them to do through things such as film and food, which is important to US soft power but they can do it through trade deals and development aid. China has been especially successful in Africa (e.g. Angola) where it has secured important access to raw materials for its companies. Another example is how South Korea has developed links with Bolivia to help develop its lithium industry.

*As before, this is a very thoughtful application of knowledge and understanding. There is perhaps a need for further AO2 comment or two about the limitations of military power. However, the AO1 material offered regarding South Korea and China's operation in Africa is strong and well-focussed.*

So soft power is an essential set of tools for the emerging countries and with Trump in the White House they have plenty of opportunities to sell themselves as 'friends' by contrasting themselves with the much more aggressive stance taken by the USA.

*A strong 'sign-off' here with a clear statement of a conclusion and a thoughtful remark about possible changes since Trump's election. This is a Level 3 response and was given 12 marks with both AOs being met at Level 3.*

**Topic 8A Health, Human Rights and Intervention**

**Question 5(d) Using Figures 5a and 5b and your own knowledge and understanding.**

**Evaluate whether military action has a stronger record of improving human rights rather than improving development. (20 marks) (AO1 = 5, AO2 = 15)**

It is fair to say that neither military intervention or development aid have very good track records in improving human rights. These rights are the basic rights of freedom from persecution, degrading treatment and imprisonment without trial amongst others. They have been an important part of international law since the Nuremberg trials and a central part of the United Nations work is devoted to both the monitoring and improvement of those rights. However, in the real world they can be conveniently set-aside as and when other motives take over. The most obvious one is economic interests and an example of this is the Anglo-American military intervention in Iraq that was allegedly partly to do with protection of human rights but also seemed driven by the existence of the underused Iraqi oil-fields.

*This is a very solid opening paragraph although there is no reference made to the resources available. There is also more than a hint that the student has taken a slightly different reading of the title than that intended by comparing military action with development aid in terms of their respective performance in improving human rights.*

There are a number of interesting contradictions concerning development. The United Nations has set and reset developmental goals to improve the life of individuals and communities. These include targeted reductions in infant mortality, maternal mortality, improvements in literacy. Whilst many people applaud these goals there are also critics who suggest that poverty reduction can never create wealth and so, in the end, it cannot help a country develop. For these critics' aid would be better directed at encouraging the development of industries in poor countries. Unfortunately, both the IMF and the WTO advise policies that reduce the ability of poor countries to control their own economic policies and most countries find it impossible to develop their own industries when faced with foreign competitions.

*This paragraph reinforces the impression that the student has taken a very different view of the title – much of what is said here is impressive but the focus is unclear.*

Figure 5b shows a number of direct and indirect examples of military and non-military interventions. It should be said that some of the 'non-military' interventions have a military edge; not least the building of islands in the South China Sea. The development impact of these non-direct interventions is very limited certainly for most of the countries involved. This is normal given that the aim is to increase the power and influence of the intervening power.

*We are now back on track with the title as intended. The lesson here is that these resource-based questions obviously need planning with the resource as a focus from the start rather than, as here, seeming to be something of an afterthought.*

However, military interventions have an even worse record both in terms of development and human rights. It is hard to find examples of where interventions allegedly designed to improve the human rights of the population have achieved that. Of course, it is possible to say that these might be long term. This is the claim of Tony Blair when asked about his feelings about the impact of the Iraq war which he supported. He claims that, in the long term, Iraqis will have a better life. However, they have had to endure an almost constant war since that invasion and, most recently, the barbaric Caliphate. Much the same can be argued about the UK intervention in Libya in 2011; a country still is chaos. A counter argument that has to be listened to is the alternative of not intervening at all. This is also part of Blair's defence and he can point at Zimbabwe as an example of the desperate state of the people when ruled by a dictator who takes no account of human rights just as is Rwanda on Figure 5b.

*This is a well-focussed paragraph although it needs some balance by adding something on development. The comparison between case-study information about Iraq and Zimbabwe with the Rwandan material provided by Figure 5b is useful.*

There is a darker history to military intervention. The USA has been involved in Latin America militarily either directly or indirectly on over 70 occasions since the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. All of those interventions have been justified as either defending the US against a foreign aggressor or to defend the human rights of the people against their own government. This often resulted in propping up or establishing quite unpleasant military dictatorships who have often used terror on their own people, making the human rights worse rather than better. Modern examples of both Syria and Afghanistan repeat some of this history. For example, the US intervened in Afghanistan in the 1980's to promote rebellion against the occupying Soviet forces in the name of human rights. The people that they trained included the Taliban and Osama-bin-laden who later became the enemy of the United States. The human rights and development record of Afghanistan since that time has hardly improved at all; in fact by most measures it has all got a lot worse. Claiming human rights as a reason for military intervention is obviously easier for people to justify than more complicated geopolitical motives or straightforward economics.

*There is a little too much story-telling here the application does come although it tends to be asserted rather than evidenced. It is very helpful if students can unwrap the key concepts effectively. This essay doesn't really engage with how development can be measured which is obviously a valuable tool to evaluate the 'before' and 'after' impact of military interventions. Human rights are better dealt with although again, not in great depth.*

So, in conclusion, although it is important to repeat that we need to take a long view of the results of military intervention and that although there is no score-sheet to measure success the picture is not a very positive one. The story for military intervention is much less positive and it is very hard to find evidence of 'just wars' let alone wars that achieved what they claimed as a motive – to improve human rights or the development of the society, economically or politically. In fact, there is quite a lot of evidence of wars reducing human rights and reducing development, above all the right to live in peace. So the title is clearly wrong even taking a very optimistic view of military intervention.

*This is complicated essay to assess because it clearly starts with a different view of the title than it picks up in paragraph 3. It would appear that the student didn't look at the resource until starting to write and in these 20-mark essays planning is really important. However, there is some very good material too and enough to warrant a Level 4 mark for its AO1 but not for AO2 because of the amount of irrelevance in the argument which thus lacks 'balance' and is not a 'full and coherent interpretation'. It is instructive to read this answer alongside the answer to 6b. It was assessed at 15/20, the top of Level 3.*

**Topic 8B Migration, Identity and Sovereignty**

**Question 6(d) With reference to Figures 7a, 7b and 7c and your own knowledge and understanding.**

**Evaluate the advantages of low-tax regimes, such as the Isle of Man, for individuals, organisations and countries. (20 marks) (AO1 = 5, AO2 = 15)**

Tax havens are very controversial. They have become a major debating point in the world economy and although many individuals, organisations and governments protest about them they continue to exist which suggests that no one is really interested in getting rid of them. One thing that is certain is that it will need governments to co-operate to outlaw them and the fact that they haven't points to the fact that they obviously benefit some of the people in government.

*An excellent opening statement – the student doesn't, in fact, clarify what tax-havens are but the clarity of the position is unquestionable and helps give the essay a very clear focus.*

Obviously the low-tax regime countries benefit as shown on 7b and 7c. The individuals who live there pay very few taxes and Figure 7b shows that the GDP of the Isle of Man has increased much more than it has in the UK – actually 3 times faster since 1984. This might not be great data because GDP is very unreliable and we are not told if this is PPP data so the cost of living in the Isle of Man might be very high. Actually, there is evidence of this because 7c says that house prices are high. Interestingly it says that wages are 50% higher than in the rest of the UK yet GDP is 3 times higher which is a bit odd. Maybe the rest is profits which might go to businesses or the government. If it goes to the government that might help them build better hospitals and schools too which will benefit the people there. Nor do we know the reasons for this increase in GDP. Other critics might say that encouraging gambling isn't good for people and a lot of people are in poverty because they are encouraged to take part in on-line gambling. So, there are obviously some winners and losers in that.

*There is a great deal of material in this paragraph which would profit from being split. However the argument is sustained and contains excellent argument and counter-argument. The on-going evaluation at the end is also very useful. As it happens, this is last reference to Figure 7 made by this student which is on the thin side. However, they compensate by building on the generic points extremely well with their own knowledge and understanding.*

On a wider scale the problem with low-tax regimes is complicated. Whatever the issues for the people in the Isle of Man tax havens create many problems for other countries and their people. For example, many US transnational corporations pay their taxes in low tax countries. This increases their profits which obviously benefits their owners. That is where it gets complicated because although some of the owners are very rich people who have an increased income so increasing inequalities which might have a poor impact on social stability they also benefit many people who have pensions and insurances. If large TNCs make large profits because they pay less tax because they use places like the Isle of Man that can reduce the cost of UK insurance policies or make sure that pensions are OK. That suggests that everyone has a vested interest in keeping corporate profits as high as possible. So, Apple pay their taxes of European sales in Ireland which is a low-tax haven. That is pretty good for Ireland because Apple have about 8000 workers there in accountancy and finance paid well because of that. It is already pretty good for Apple who only pay about 2% tax on their profits so they have much more money to invest in new research but also more money goes to their owners who, as I said before, are big companies looking after insurance and pensions.



*It is a bit of a shame that the student doesn't cross-reference to Figure 7c which offers some useful information about Google and US tax regimes which would supplement their own Apple knowledge and understanding.*

Critics of this system comment that companies like this keep wages really low and that they have no loyalty to any one country. In fact, it is almost inevitable that benefits to a country will be uneven. It is not likely that all the inhabitants of the Isle of Man or Ireland benefit from its status as a tax-haven. However, there is evidence that there is benefit for the super-rich who have increased their share of global wealth very rapidly in the past few years. According to Oxfam, 8 individuals own more than 50% of global wealth and even if this is an exaggeration it is agreed by many, including Forbes magazine and the IMF that inequalities is the most important challenge to economic stability. Although these inequalities are not only a result of the existence of tax-havens they are a big part of it. The IMF calculates that over \$18 trillion is found in the banks of the small island states, such as the Cayman Islands. That is 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the size of the whole world economy! 83 of the USA's largest 100 corporations and no less than 99 out the top European companies have bank accounts in tax havens. Most of the largest users are banks. It is obvious that all this missing cash could make a huge difference to living standards in many parts of the world, with governments spending money on schools and hospitals, social infrastructure and research. Whatever the benefits might be for some the costs are enormous.

*Another very impressive if slightly overlong paragraph making the point about global inequalities with quite outstanding knowledge and understanding applied to this question which stays tightly in focus. A very good PEEEL paragraph.*

It is obvious that tax-havens have a few benefits but those are generally quite restricted. Governments know perfectly well that their existence is a major issue and ultimately unsustainable both economically and socially. And it is governments that could change the tax-rules if they wished. The current global system certainly doesn't benefit most of the people who live in advanced or emerging countries and certainly not the low income countries. The organisations that benefit are Trans-national Corporations and their shareholders, especially the large shareholders who are also TNCs! But the advantages to these organisations and governments are tiny when compared to the costs.

*This is a very good essay indeed. The slightly light-handed use of the resources is more than compensated by the excellent analysis of the student's own information so comfortably enough for full marks on AO1. Given that the title doesn't restrict answers to any particular scale the global focus here is very well handled showing an outstanding appreciation of the topic and full marks for AO2. Thus, it is obviously a Level 4 answer and was awarded 20 marks.*