

2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT

GGY315120 GEOGRAPHY

General Comments

The 2025 Geography exam followed a similar line of questions as previous years. Strong candidates were able to show a thorough understanding of the course content and were able to prepare themselves well for the exam. Students should use past exam questions to assist their study preparation for the exam. However, as the line of questioning on the exam followed a similar style of questions, it was evident that some candidates had used past papers to pre-prepare their responses. It is important that students read each part of every question and ensure they address each question with accuracy rather than a rote learned response.

Candidates should ensure they follow the suggested time guidelines for each section to enable enough time to adequately respond to each section.

It is recommended that candidates do not write their responses in pencil. Many Geography students chose to do this and, in some cases, this made their responses difficult to read.

Students should ensure they address the criteria assessed in each section.

A simple grammatical mistake was commonly made throughout many candidate responses. This was the lack of capital letters when referring to continents, countries and cities. Many candidates also incorrectly identified continents as countries.

Section A

Question 1

This question assessed Criterion 4

In part A, candidates were required to describe the population growth of India, China, the United States, Indonesia and Pakistan from 1950 to 2023. Most students were able to describe the general pattern of the graph overall and provide a summary of the data. For example, in general, respondents identified that India and China have experienced rapid population growth and that the United States, Indonesia and Pakistan have all grown, be it at a slower rate. Stronger candidates were then able to provide examples that highlighted and broke down the general patterns. For example, referring to India's population growth in 1950, 1990, 2000 and 2023, using population figures and making future projections where appropriate or comparisons to other countries. Strong responses also identified anomalies or exceptions to the general pattern. For example, that China has had continual growth although there was a slowing around 1960 and that although the United States, Indonesia and Pakistan have all grown at a similar rate, since 2010, Pakistan has experienced faster growth evidenced by the gradient of the graph becoming steeper.

In part B, candidates were required to select one country from the Information sheet: Population of Selected Countries from 1950 to 2023 and create a table using the Data Sheet: World Population

Data (2024). The table needed to include births per 1000 population, deaths per 1000 population, net migration rate, projected population (millions) for mid-2035 and projected population (millions) for mid-2050. The majority of students were able to do this and correctly constructed a table with the required information for either India, China, the United States, Indonesia or Pakistan and included the relevant units for the data. Some students failed to include a table, and a small number of students picked a different country although this was seen by markers as a candidate not correctly addressing the question and was marked accordingly.

Candidates were then asked to explain the growth or decrease of the country's population over time using at least two (2) indicators. Candidates were able to use different indicators to those already recorded in their tables and stronger candidates utilised more than two indicators in their descriptions of population growth or decline. Popular extra indicators included total fertility rate, infant mortality rate and life expectancy.

Strong candidates were able to link the growth or decrease of the country's population back to factors such as fertility policies, industrialisation, increases in economic wealth and access to better healthcare, etc. A number of candidates made reference to the Demographic Transition Model although this was often not done well or was talked about generically and not linked back to the specific country that was being discussed.

It should also be noted that a positive net migration rate indicates a country that is gaining population due to immigration (people coming into an area) and a negative net migration rate indicates a country that is experiencing a loss of population due to emigration (people leaving an area). A positive or negative net migration rate does not necessarily correlate with a declining or growing population change overall when taken in isolation and needs to be considered with other indicators in mind such as fertility rate and births/ deaths per 1,000.

Question 2

This question assessed Criterion 6

Candidates were required to respond to three distinct parts (a, b and c).

Responses varied significantly in depth. While some candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of urban challenges in Australia and linked these to appropriate examples, others provided superficial or generic statements with limited reference to specific places, programs or long-term outcomes. Students should avoid only discussing one specific urban area (e.g. Sydney or Brisbane). The question asks for urban challenges in Australia, so it is more appropriate to use a range of cities as examples of wider urban challenges across Australia, rather than discussing a challenge that is particular to one city.

For part a) most students were able to identify suitable challenges facing Australian cities. Commonly discussed issues included traffic congestion, urban sprawl, limited public transport provision, housing affordability, social and economic inequality and the urban heat island effect.

Stronger responses described each challenge in detail, explaining why it is a challenge in the Australian urban context and situating it within broader processes such as population growth, infrastructure strain or socio-spatial patterns.

Weaker responses provided an in-depth description of one challenge but only brief comments on the second, while other responses merely listed a challenge without any explanation; for example, stating “traffic congestion” without describing why it is a challenge in urban Australia.

For part b), candidates were required to outline one solution or program that is being implemented, or could be implemented, to address one of the challenges identified in part a). Stronger responses named a specific program, initiative or policy and described how it operates within a particular Australian urban area.

Weaker responses did not identify specific programs or policies instead relying on vague statements such as “the government should do more” or “increase public transport,” without offering any further detail. Some proposed hypothetical solutions but did not explain where, when or how these solutions might be implemented. Others provided solutions for both challenges, which was unnecessary and reduced the time available to develop a detailed response for the required component of the question.

Detailed examples such as light rail expansions, congestion management schemes, or urban greening initiatives enabled better responses to demonstrate depth and relevance.

To successfully address part c) candidates were required to assess the likely outcomes of their chosen solution over time. Stronger responses clearly differentiated this task from part B by assessing the solution’s effectiveness, sustainability, social, economic, and environmental implications, and impacts at different temporal scales (short-, medium- and long-term). These students were able to draw on the specific details provided earlier to give an informed, evidence-based assessment.

Many responses offered no evaluation or only a limited evaluation.

Section B

This section assessed Criteria 4 and 5.

Question 3

This question required candidates to explain the causes of anthropogenic climate change and discuss two ways in which this is having an impact on people and their environment. Candidates were required to refer to one MDC and one LDC in their response.

Stronger responses correctly used key concepts like enhanced greenhouse effect, carbon sinks, albedo effect and radiative forcing in their explanation of this process. These responses also made reference to the human activities causing this process and how they are leading to anthropogenic climate change. While it is important to mention burning of fossil fuels as a contributing factor to anthropogenic climate change, it would be beneficial for candidates to mention what these activities include. Weaker responses referred to the ozone layer, which is not associated with anthropogenic climate change.

Many candidates were able to identify the impacts on the environment and most referred to those studied within the course; rising sea levels leading to land cover loss, glacier and ice sheet retraction, cropland/pasture loss, coral reef loss/degradation and desertification. Stronger responses were able to accurately explain how anthropogenic climate change caused the impact and how this impacted land cover and people. Students referring to rising sea levels should

ensure they refer to thermal expansion and not just melting of land-based ice. These responses also need to discuss how the rise in sea level impacts the environment including loss of land, increased salination of soil and impacts on agricultural land. Candidates that discussed coral reef loss need to ensure this is in relation to anthropogenic climate change and not due to overfishing, increased tourism and pollution run off. Desertification needs to link with anthropogenic climate change and not overgrazing or deforestation. Appropriate causes of desertification include prolonged droughts as a result of extreme weather events caused by anthropogenic climate change.

Better responses also include the impact on people. These responses referred to the impact on people's livelihood and income as a result of the loss of agricultural land or decrease in tourism. Some candidates were also able to discuss climate change refugees and the need for people to relocate their home due to the impacts of climate change.

Question 4

This question required candidates to describe the social and environmental impacts of one form of human action on land cover using a specific example from a country of choice.

The forms of human actions referred to should have been those covered throughout the course including deforestation, mining, urban expansion, land reclamation, the expansion and intensification of agriculture, rangeland modification, land and soil degradation, irrigation and land drainage.

The most common human actions discussed were deforestation, mining and urban expansion. Deforestation was written about more than any of the other topics. Brazil and Indonesia were the most referred to countries in the discussion of deforestation.

The focus of the response should be the direct human action leading to land cover change. Deforestation should be discussed in relation to how humans are physically removing trees and the purpose of this (nature of the action). Common examples included removal of forests in Indonesia for plantation of trees for palm oil. Other examples included deforestation in Brazil as a result of clearing land for agricultural activities. This was a better way to approach this question, rather than referring to the removal of trees due to bushfires, which is not a direct human action. Strong responses referred to the direct human action and how the land had changed over time. Better responses should discuss how the land has changed and providing statistics on how this has changed over time added to these responses.

Social impacts needed to refer to the consequence of the human action i.e. impact on indigenous groups, impact on tourism and the aesthetic value of a place. It is appropriate to discuss illness and disease that may be encountered as a result of the land cover change for example an increase in malaria due to an increase in mosquitoes. Some candidates were able to link with the importance of the forest in relation to First Nations people as a social impact. It is not within the scope of the question to comment on the social impacts in relation to the type of employment.

Section C

This section assessed Criteria 3 and 5.

General Comments

Candidates were allocated 45 minutes to complete all questions in this section, with a suggested time of 15 minutes per question. All questions contribute equally to the ratings for each criterion. Weaker responses often spent too long on one or more questions.

Some responses clearly identified specific advancements in transport and technology, world cities and regions of economic power and cultural influence. However, to achieve higher ratings for Criterion 5, candidates needed to *explain* the geographical processes and phenomena, not simply identify them.

Examples should help candidates highlight and explain the geographical processes involved. For higher ratings, examiners need to see the candidate's understanding demonstrated through their discussion of processes and phenomena, supported by relevant examples.

Question 5

This question allowed candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the process of globalisation and how it has been shaped by enhanced or emerging technology and improvements in transport.

Strong responses provided a geographical definition of globalisation, rather than a purely economic one, and linked this to impacts on world trade, global financial markets, international corporate and retail branding, and developments in the media. Strong responses also identified the role of technology and transport in globalisation through reducing barriers of space and time.

Weaker responses tended to list technological or transport advancements with minimal explanation of how these contributed to globalisation.

A commonly used transport example was containerisation. Stronger responses explained how the standardisation of container transport enables faster movement between transport modes (road, rail and shipping), thus decreasing barriers of time, and how improvements in port facilities and cargo ships have supported global flows of goods. They also referred to major transport networks and hubs. Some candidates additionally explained how this technology has enabled countries to outsource primary and secondary industries due to lower costs, despite distance.

As the question focused on enhanced or new technology, stronger responses linked containerisation and related improvements, such as global tracking systems and artificial intelligence, to global supply chains and logistics management.

The internet was a common example of technological advancement. Strong responses explained the role of fibre-optic cable networks and new satellite technologies in increasing access to content and accelerating the flow of ideas and information. They also discussed the role of artificial intelligence and data centres in enabling global flows of digital information.

Some candidates linked technological and transport advancements by showing how they integrate to intensify globalisation, for example, e-commerce platforms that rely on low-cost offshore

manufacturing, global online banking, rapid transport networks and logistics systems using global positioning technologies to connect MNC products to consumers.

Candidates should note that globalisation is uneven and avoid generalised statements such as “everyone can access anything on the internet whenever they need it”. Although nearly twice as many people have internet access than not, billions still remain unconnected. Stronger responses identified growing global connectivity while explaining that global transport and communication networks also create barriers for those who remain outside these systems.

Weaker responses often provided a historical recount of past technological or transport developments without explaining how improved transport and enhanced or new technologies have contributed to globalisation.

Question 6

This question required candidates to refer to two world cities and explain how and why they are important as major centres of cultural and economic influence in the modern world. Strong responses placed urbanisation in context and explained the contribution cities make to global economic productivity. Many strong responses also defined the term *world city*, with some referring to classifications such as Kearney’s Global Cities Index or the Globalisation and World Cities (GaWC) classifications.

The most commonly selected world cities were New York City, Tokyo, London, Shenzhen, Dubai, Paris, Singapore and Los Angeles (all Alpha cities according to GaWC). Other frequently chosen cities included Seoul, Sydney, San Francisco, Milan, Shanghai, Mumbai, Beijing, Amsterdam, Vienna, Boston, Frankfurt, Jakarta, Chicago and Kuala Lumpur (also Alpha cities). Suitable Beta and Gamma cities chosen included Prague, Dhaka, Rome, Lagos and Bangalore.

Most responses identified economic and cultural features of their chosen cities, such as well-known landmarks. However, weaker responses simply listed or described these features, often in a historical context. Stronger responses explained *how* these features contributed to globalisation processes and created cultural and economic impacts in the modern world.

It is important that candidates discuss the influence of the *city itself*, rather than focusing on cultural or economic elements from the wider country. For example, instead of naming a cultural food that has become globalised, candidates should explain the role the city played in its diffusion. The same applies to music genres. Students should explain how the city facilitated their global spread, rather than attributing this influence to the country.

Strong responses named specific multinational or transnational corporations (MNCs or TNCs) and explained how these organisations increase transnational diffusion and integration as part of globalisation. They discussed global supply chains and the role of cities as hubs that facilitate economic and cultural flows of information and ideas, supported by their infrastructure.

Strong responses also discussed the ongoing rise in global urbanisation and the increasingly significant role that cities play in global transport and communication networks.

Question 7

This question was generally answered well.

Candidates were required to discuss trends or shifts in global economic power and cultural influence over the past decade, with reference to specific regions and/or countries. The most commonly discussed examples were China, India, the United States and Europe. Others referred to the G7, E7, BRICS and G20 groups due to their shared organisational interests. Strong responses contextualised their discussions about chosen countries or regions using data.

Weaker responses focused heavily on historical shifts in economic and cultural power. While these can provide useful context, the question required a focus on developments *within the past decade*.

Relevant discussion points included economic and cultural aspects of:

- US tariff policies
- China's investment in global trade and associated infrastructure
- The Russia-Ukraine conflict
- Covid-19 responses and impacts
- demographic changes and their effects on economic growth
- regional trade agreements
- political and security alliances
- the Israel–Palestine conflict

When discussing cultural influence, strong responses identified the ongoing processes of Americanisation, Europeanisation and Westernisation, noting that these continue to shape global culture despite the growing influence of other regions as globalisation expands.

Weaker responses tended to list what some countries are well known for in terms of culture, rather than the role of globalisation in continuing cultural influence.

Section D

This section assessed Criteria 3 and 6.

Question 8

This was the most commonly answered question in this section, with the most commonly chosen examples being Rio de Janeiro, Jakarta, São Paulo, Mumbai, Mexico City, Cairo and Kinshasa. The stronger answers clearly defined what a megacity is and included the population size data of their chosen city to show that it met the definition.

However, the question also asked students to explain why the city had grown, and only a few responses covered this in enough detail. The best answers discussed rural-to-urban migration and explained relevant push and pull factors. Some students appeared to use a pre-prepared paragraph that did not properly respond to the specific question.

The second part asked students to explain the causes and consequences of two major challenges faced by the megacity. Common examples included pollution, traffic congestion, social inequality and poor-quality housing. The strongest responses linked these challenges directly to the city's growing population and explained why each issue is a problem for the megacity. Some data may need context to be provided in order to highlight its significance. For example, when giving the

average traffic speed of a city it would be helpful to highlight this as a challenge by giving the average from another megacity or global city speed average to contextualise the challenge as significant.

Some weaker responses identified the challenges for their megacity but did not explain the causes of the challenges. Other weak responses may have identified a challenge but may have only discussed an aspect of the challenge without explanation as to why that was the focus of the challenge. For example, 'Air Pollution' is a common challenge discussed and there are many possible causes of this challenge, so if only one cause is chosen, data should be used to identify how significant the cause is to the overall challenge of air pollution in the city.

Students were also required to discuss two strategies used to address these challenges and to evaluate the effectiveness of these, including the likelihood of success. Strong answers described solutions that the city had already tried and explained how successful they were and why. Other high-quality responses suggested solutions used in other cities and explained whether they might work in the chosen megacity. The strong responses based their evaluations on data presented in their discussions and the trajectories of the data. Strong responses also evaluated their solutions in relation to the ongoing sustainability of the solutions.

Weaker responses provided very little detail about the strategies and did not include any evaluation of how effective those strategies might be. Some weaker responses did not evaluate the strategies they discussed and instead suggested that their chosen city needed to evaluate solutions from other cities, thus not adequately addressing the question.

Question 9

There was a relatively even spread of topics selected by candidates for this question, with the most common focus being rising sea levels leading to land cover loss. Some responses, however, did not adequately describe the geographical background to their chosen land cover change or clearly identify its key components, as required by Criterion 6.

Weaker responses demonstrated only a basic understanding of anthropogenic climate change, often using simplistic explanations such as attributing it solely to the burning of fossil fuels without explaining the processes linking emissions to observed land cover change. Some candidates incorrectly associated anthropogenic climate change with ozone depletion, indicating a fundamental misunderstanding of the phenomenon. Others confused the albedo effect with the enhanced greenhouse effect, or incorrectly conflated ultraviolet radiation with infrared radiation, further demonstrating gaps in conceptual understanding.

The question also required candidates to describe local and/or international initiatives addressing the impacts of anthropogenic climate change on their selected land cover change. Stronger responses clearly identified whether their chosen initiatives were examples of adaptation or mitigation and discussed the scale and potential effectiveness of these initiatives in addressing observed impacts.

Question 10

This question was only answered by a limited number of candidates. Responses needed to refer to the negative environmental impacts of one form of human impact of land cover change. It was then essential that an existing program and evaluation of the program were discussed. Deforestation was the most common impact discussed. It is important that candidates address all parts of the question to ensure they meet the requirements of Criterion 6. In some cases, the evaluation of the program was poorly addressed.

Question 11

Only a limited number of candidates answered this question. Candidates were required to give specific examples of how the distribution of production and consumption of one commodity, good or service had changed. They were then required to evaluate the social, economic and geopolitical implications of these changes. Candidates need to ensure that all elements of the question are addressed.

Stronger responses showed a great level of detail as to how the commodity, good or service had changed over time and its likely pattern for the future. Reference to specific countries and regions was essential and greatly enhanced these responses. Weaker responses provide limited detail and did not show an in-depth level of the topic they had studied. There were also some responses that weren't in essay format, which affected Criterion 3.

Candidates should refer to globalisation in their response.

Question 12

There were a range of topics selected, the most common being political ideas. There were a significant number of candidates who responded to this question using fascism as their cultural element. A large proportion of these responses were unable to make links with globalisation and did not adequately discuss how transport and communication had influenced the spread of these ideas. There was a strong focus on the historical element which was not within the scope of the question.

Stronger responses clearly described where their chosen cultural element originated, where and when it initially spread and its current distribution. These responses also explained, using specific examples, how particular developments in communication and transport contributed to the spread of this element. Well-answered responses made reference to the term globalisation and used their cultural element to highlight how communication and transport are drivers of this process.

Several responses did not refer to the economic, social or geopolitical implications of the current pattern and how this may change into the future. This was a crucial part of the question and a key part in addressing Criterion 6.

Candidates should be encouraged to read and respond to all parts of the question to enable them to address the elements in the criteria assessed. Limited responses were unable to demonstrate effectively their understanding of globalisation and how this has impacted on the pattern of geographical distribution on a global basis. Some responses could only demonstrate how the cultural element had been distributed within one country or region and not on a global scale.