Practical strategies for succeeding in geography exams

Mark Jones
Geography Tutor
UWE, Bristol.

Geographical Association Bristol Branch
Wednesday 26 March 2014 4.30 - 6.30pm
G1: Changing Physical Environments (1. climate change, 2. tectonic and hydrological change)

G2: Changing Human Environments (1. population change, 2. settlement change)

G3: Contemporary Themes and Research in Geography
   (A) 1 from Desert and Tundra; Glacial or Coastal; or Climatic hazards. 1 from Development; Globalisation; either India or China (B) Individual research (10 themes)

G4: Sustainability
   Pre-release on one of Food, Water, Energy Cities,

Unit 1 Physical and Human Geography
   Rivers plus 1 of (Cold env.; Coasts; Hot desert)

Unit 2 Geographical Skills

Unit 3 Contemporary Geographical Issues
   Plate tectonics; Weather and climate; Ecosystems World cities; Development and globalisation Contemporary conflicts

Unit 4 Fieldwork or Issue Evaluation

Unit 1: Global Challenges
   1: World at Risk
   2: Going Global

Unit 2: Geographical Investigations
   1: Extreme Weather
   2: Crowded Coasts
   3: Unequal Spaces
   4: Rebranding Places

Unit 3: Contested Planet

Unit 4: Geographical Research

4:30 Introduction and big picture

AS Managing Physical Environments (Rivers, Coasts, Cold env.; Hot/semi-arid)

AS Managing Change in Human Environments (urban change, rural change, energy, tourism).

A2 Global Issues
   A. Environmental Issues (earth hazards, ecosystems, climatic hazards)
   B. Economic Issues (population, globalization, development)

A2 Geographical Skills
Revision strategies (knowledge, skills))
Revision checklist
Acronyms, Mnemonics
Flash cards and loop activities
Hexagons, Drawing, Diagrams, Taboo,

Examination strategies (knowledge, understanding skills,)
Familiarity with content/past papers
Practice: short structured questions and essays
Assessment Self/peer/teacher assessment
Practice: essay plans; Structure; Making an argument; Conclusions not summaries

What the examiners say

Practical strategies for succeeding in geography exams
4:30 Introduction and big picture
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4:30 Introduction and big picture

4:40 Take command

4:50 Terminology is key/ Planning essays

5:00 Introductions – what’s my essay title

5:10 Structure, Paragraphs, Conclusions – PEEL

5:20 3D- essays

5:40 Short break and refreshments

5:50 Revision tip 1 It’s a team game

6:00 Revision tip 2 Ropey revision

6:10 Revision tip 3 Hexagons: making connections

6:20 Revision tip 4 - 5 min mnemonic madness/ acronym sharing

6:25 Final remarks
Take command

describe, analyse, explain, account for..., state, identify, to what extent, discuss, compare, contrast, examine, explain in detail, using a named example, distinguish between, outline the reasons for, assess, evaluate, annotate, illustrate, comment on, give reasons for..
With reference to named examples, discuss the geographical issues arising from changing population structure (15 marks)
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Plan don’t over plan

With reference to named examples, discuss the geographical issues arising from changing population structure (15 marks)
With reference to named examples, discuss the geographical issues arising from changing population structure (15 marks).

Analysis, give both points of view, argue the case, support your points.

Population Increasing/decreasing – natural increase (+/-migration in/out)

(++)  (++)  (- -)  (-+)

Social-cultural  ++/--
Economic  ++/--
Environmental  ++/--

CS1 – (DRC)
Democratic Republic Congo

CS2 - Singapore

CS3 - UK

CS4 - Germany

CS5 London Docklands
Plan don’t over plan

- Discuss whether positive economic impacts for countries from developing tourism outweigh the negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts?

Evaluation, both perspectives, to what extent do you agree?

- EC +1
- Ec +2
- Ec +3
- Ec +4

- Env-1
- Env-2
- Env-3
- Env-4

Content - access parts of mind map

- SC -1
- SC -2
- SC -3
- SC -4

Better written responses
Candidates need to carefully read the full question or key terms in the question, especially at A2. Not doing this is the single biggest cause of under-achievement. Too many candidates offer pre-learnt answers that do not fit exactly the demands of the wording of the question.

(OCR, June 2013)
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What’s my essay title?

- AS Essay Title C
- AS Essay Title D
- AS Essay Title E
- AS Essay Title F

A2 Essay Title A
- Example of an introduction

A2 Essay Title B
- Example of an introduction

Better written responses
What’s my essay title?

Essay A Evaluate how plate tectonics theory helps our understanding of the distribution of seismic and volcanic events.

Essay B ‘The decentralisation of retailing and other services has had a major impact on urban areas.’ To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Essay C Examine the effects of greying population on health and welfare services?

Essay D Choose one named area of the world and explain why it is considered a disaster hotspot?

Essay E Using a case study, assess the causes and consequences of coastal flooding?

Essay F Using a case study; assess how successful one country has been in managing population change?
What the examiners say

Introductions

‘Don’t include irrelevant ‘chat’ or introductions that repeat the question.
(OCR Examiners’ report June, 2013)

Clear
Unambiguous
Context overview
Structure -1

• Clear structure to response

[Diagram]

- Introduction -1
- Paragraph - 2
- Paragraph - n
- Conclusion

Logical sequence
Internal coherency
‘Free standing, self-supporting unit of text’

• A core statement of information or opinion
• A context to establish the significance of this statement to the point of the essay
• Evidence to support the statement
• Examples to illustrate the sources
• References for sources

PEEL
(Point, Explanation, Example, Link back to question)
Local people may adapt existing practices e.g. repeating religious ceremonies a number of times instead of just once on a significant day, in response to the needs of tourists wanting entertainment.

Spain’s Alarde festival is an example of such staged authenticity which eventually led to its demise so undermining local people’s traditions and creating a form of cultural commodification.

**PEEL**
(Point, Explanation, Example, Link back to question)
What the examiners say

Extended writing
Structure clear introduction, with one major aspect per paragraph and a conclusion. Evaluation

With the emphasis on suggesting that the viewpoint may vary over time, location and depending on who you are within the community.

a number of case studies at different scales and/or locations.

(OCR teacher support materials, 2013)
Tourism

Ecotourism

Natural (species) attracts Humans
Humans affect natural attractions
Interconnected

AS
Rivers
Biomes

Links to structure of rainforest encouraging diversity of species as attraction

Sustainable development
How eco-friendly is ecotourism?

A2
Coasts

Diverge coastal environments e.g. coral reef, mangrove swamps – how affected by building – down-drift implications of sediment supply – increased erosion – knock on effect on tourism

Case studies from Australia (MEDC)
Costa Rica (LEDC)

What is synopticity?
What the examiners say

Poor responses result where candidates:

• Provide answers based on pre-learnt case studies – ‘answering the question they wanted to come up’
• Make uncritical use of case studies
• Poor use and spelling of terminology
• Identify synoptic elements ‘Like I did...’
• Are more descriptive than analytical
• Offer no conclusion
What the examiners say

Conclusions

Advice from Principal Examiners from different awarding bodies

‘Show some attempt at a conclusion as the mark scheme rewards clear or effective conclusions’
(OCR Examiners’ report June, 2013)

‘Longer conclusions often simply repeat information already presented.’
In recent years composite measures such as the PQLI and the HDI have been used to measure countries' levels of development. GNP is only one measure and is economic, it fails to capture other important aspects of development. Countries' levels of development can be measured by a range of factors...
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A2 Geographical Skills

Unit 1 Physical and Human Geography
Rivers plus 1 of (Cold env.; Coasts; Hot desert)
Population plus 1 of (Food supply issues; Energy issues Health issues)

Unit 2 Geographical Skills

Unit 3 Contemporary Geographical Issues
Plate tectonics; Weather and climate; Ecosystems
World cities; Development and globalisation
Contemporary conflicts

Unit 4 Fieldwork or Issue Evaluation

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4:30 Introduction and big picture
### Example of Revision checklist for AQA A2 topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate tectonics and associated hazards</th>
<th>How well I understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The structure of the Earth in cross-section, and the theory of and evidence for plate tectonics and continental drift. Key Terminology/case studies <em>Wegner, Sea floor spreading, Mid Atlantic Ridge</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tectonic processes operating at plate margins and hotspots, and the causes and nature of volcanicity, seismicity and associated landforms. Key Terminology/case studies <em>Hawaiian islands; Nazca/S American</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship between types of plate margins and the type and frequency of volcanic activity</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4:30 Introduction and big picture
As candidates move up the levels in the mark scheme, the balance of skills demonstrated in their answers changes significantly.

Level 1: Answers rely, with varying accuracy and appropriateness, on the Resource Booklet to describe the situation, with some partial explanations.

Level 2: Some aspects of the issue/situation are explained, and descriptive material supports this. No attempt is made to move beyond the Resource Booklet.

Level 3: Descriptive material is used selectively, and explanations are clear; evaluation begins but may be implied; some basic synoptic information is used, not fully appropriately.

Level 4: Description is selective and explanations are concise and applied to the question, which supports evaluative judgements in a synoptic context.

Reference: *Getting Started GCE Geography* (Edexcel, 2013)
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It’s a team game
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Ropey Revision

X axis
Y axis
Bars
Lines

DTM
TALC
Climate
Pop pyramids

Revision tips and activities
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Coastal management

Geology

Causes of weathering

Causes of marine erosion

Human use

Case study location
2005 Kashmir Earthquake.

Impact on People:
- 44,000 people killed
- 52,000 buildings collapsed
- 5,500,000 displaced
- 14,000 injured

Location:
- Collision boundary
- Extension and Indian plate
- Epicenter 12km from Muzaffarabad
- 950,000 pets in Muzaffarabad
- 32 km below surface

Intensity & Magnitude:
- 7.6 magnitude
- Similar in size to:
  - 2001 San Andreas, San Francisco
  - 1906 San Francisco
- 32,000 buildings collapsed

Regularity & Frequency:
- Earthquake caused by社团 fault on 2001 in Gujarat
- 13 aftershocks with 4-8 magnitude
- Occurred on 8th October

Pics & Figures:
- 6,000,000 new residents
- 14,000 killed
- $9 billion in aid

Duration & Speed of Onset:
- 7.4 Aftershocks
- Happened at 06:23:50 am
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Acronyms

• CLORPT
Acronyms

- CLORPT
- Climate
- Organisms
- Relief
- P________
- Time

- Types of volcanic eruption
Mnemonics

• Please Come On Sunday, Do Come Please. Then John Clease Eloped On My Prize Pony........
A level Geography

Diagram of the week

In the news

What am I worth?

PEEL

BRIC

MINT

CASH

GEOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHY

KEEP CALM GEOGRAPHY

REVISION BOARD

Diagram of the week
Well done you have survived 2 hours and 5 minutes of geography revision and examination preparation.