Candidates' Performance

Paper 1 Section A

There were 40 multiple-choice questions in this paper. The average number of questions answered correctly by candidates was 25. There was a slight improvement in the overall performance of candidates as compared with last year. Five questions in which distractors were more popular than the key have been selected for further discussion.

In Item 3, the most popular answer was Option B. Candidates choosing option B likely calculated the average gradient of the section of Repulse Bay Road using the straight line distance between the two road junctions instead of the actual length of the road.

Q.3 Which of the following is the average gradient of the section of Repulse Bay Road from the road junction at 103618 to the road junction at 107639?

A.	1:12.7	(21%)
B.	1:16.6	(37%)
*C.	1:20.5	(30%)
D.	1:24.4	(12%)

In Item 4, the most popular answer was Option D. Candidates who chose Option D might have interpreted the map extract not in details and therefore overlooked the fact that the view of Cape Collison from spot height 348 would be blocked by Pottinger Peak.

Q.4 Which of the following places are intervisible with spot height 348 (150633)?

(1) Big Wave Bay Beach (162627)
(2) Trigonometrical Station at Pottinger Peak (162636)
(3) Cape Collinson (173643)

*A.	(1) and (2) only	(36%)
B.	(1) and (3) only	(6%)
C.	(2) and (3) only	(9%)
D.	(1), (2) and (3)	(49%)

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In Item 21, the most popular answer was Option B. Candidates who chose Option B might not have realised that an increase in tariffs will result in a restriction of foreign import of goods and therefore helps attract the manufacturing industry to return.

Q.21 Which of the following government policies help attract the manufacturing industry to return to the more developed countries?

(1) tax concessions
(2) increasing tariffs on manufacturing products
(3) training of industry talents

A.	(1) and (2) only	(15%)
B.	(1) and (3) only	(59%)
C.	(2) and (3) only	(4%)
*D.	(1), (2) and (3)	(22%)

In Item 23, the most popular answer was Option D. Candidates who chose Option D might have misinterpreted the rise in rural population as suburbanisation.

Q.23 Refer to the table below which shows the population composition of country X in 1965 and 2015.

	1965	2015
Rural population	3 500 000	5 500 000
Urban population	400 000	500 000

Which of the following processes has (have) taken place in country X?

(1) urbanisation
(2) suburbanisation
(3) urban growth

A.	(1) only	(3%)
*B.	(3) only	(27%)
C.	(1) and (2) only	(12%)
D.	(2) and (3) only	(58%)

In Item 26, the most popular answer was Option A. Candidates who chose Option A might have overlooked the fact that reducing the number of bus stops can improve air quality at street level because it reduces the time buses idle with their engines still running.

Q.26 Which of the following measures may improve air quality at street level?

(1) promoting electric vehicles
(2) tightening vehicle emissions standards
(3) reducing the number of bus stops

A.	(1) and (2) only	(79%)
B.	(1) and (3) only	(1%)
C.	(2) and (3) only	(1%)
*D.	(1), (2) and (3)	(19%)

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Paper 1 Section B

Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
1. (a) (i)	69	Fair. Quite a number of candidates stated the location of the earthquake of either area X or area Y incorrectly at the constructive plate boundary. Some candidates wrote answers unrelated to the plate tectonics theory or the locations of earthquakes.
(ii)		Good. Most candidates gave a detailed and systematic account of the occurrence of the earthquake in area Y.
(b) (i)		Good. Most candidates correctly described the differences in death toll and economic loss between the earthquakes of areas X and Y.
(ii)		Fair. Most candidates stated the socio-economic factors leading to the differences in death toll in the earthquakes. However, many candidates either did not quote relevant evidence systematically to support their explanations, or did not use appropriate geographical terminology in their answers. Some candidates stated the differences in earthquake magnitudes and GDP per capita between the two areas but without further explanation. Candidates generally did not explain correctly the higher economic loss in area X. Some candidates gave contradictory explanations, such as 'The death toll in area X was smaller because of the large number of quakeproof buildings, but there was greater economic loss since more buildings collapsed.'
(c)		Poor. Most candidates did not apply geographical concepts in their discussion. Quite a number of candidates either quoted irrelevant information in their discussion, or made a simple logical deduction only. Candidates should make reference to the energy loss of seismic waves, directions and rates of plate movement in their discussion. The majority of candidates did not arrive at a conclusion in their discussion.
2. (a) (i)	33	Good. Most candidates correctly identified coastal landforms P and Q.
(ii)		Satisfactory. Candidates generally had clear concepts of the physical factors which were favourable for the formation of the two coastal landforms, such as fetch, degree of site exposure, etc. However, many candidates were not used to quoting relevant map evidence to support their answers, especially for the two physical factors of 'depth of water offshore' and 'offshore gradient'. Some candidates might have misinterpreted the question and gave irrelevant answers like the formation of coastal landforms or the characteristics of waves.
(iii)		Good. Candidates generally correctly described and explained the formation of coastal landform P. However, some candidates omitted a few key processes in the answer, such as undercutting, sea cliff retreat, etc.
(b) (i)		Good. Most candidates correctly identified coastal management strategy R with proper explanation.

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Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
2. (b) (ii)		Fair. Although many candidates stated the pros and cons of coastal management strategy R, only some were able to discuss them with reference to current use of the coastal site, using less profound arguments in general. Some candidates suggested alternative coastal management strategies, which did not add to the discussion of the appropriateness of coastal management strategy R. Many candidates gave ambiguous conclusions without making a clear stance. A small number of candidates overlooked the impact of wave erosion on beaches and suggested incorrect arguments such as 'protection of the beach is unnecessary as it is formed by wave deposition'.
3. (a) (i)	32	Fair. Some candidates did not name land use X correctly.
(ii)		Good. Most candidates correctly described the adverse environmental impact brought about by land use X. However, some descriptions given by candidates tended to be general, such as affecting the ecosystem, reducing biodiversity, etc. Answers should address the specific context of the question. Some candidates confused 'air pollutants' and 'greenhouse gases'.
(b) (i)		Fair. Most candidates described generally how the land occupied by land use X is to be developed. However, only a small number of candidates were able to describe in detail the land development of different spaces.
(ii)		Fair. Candidates' knowledge of land use planning was generally inadequate. Most candidates tended to give general and nonspecific explanations. Many candidates had an incorrect concept of green area, such as stating its purpose to slow down global warming or to create wildlife habitats. Answers should illustrate how to utilise green areas as buffer zones and landscaping to reduce land use conflicts.
(c)		Fair. Many candidates answered the question using their general knowledge and explanations tended to be nonspecific. They should explain with concrete examples how the MTR station and highway foster economic activities of the adjacent land uses. Many candidates emphasised the economic benefits brought about by cross-border visitors while overlooking the importance of cross-border goods transport to the NDA.
(d)		Poor. The knowledge of most candidates in 'social sustainability' was inadequate. Many candidates discussed economic and environmental sustainability which were irrelevant. Candidates generally stated only the increase in housing and job opportunities brought about by the NDA, without analysing the information provided in the question for an in-depth discussion. Most candidates did not take a clear stance in the conclusion.
4. (a)	65	Good. Most candidates were able to correctly describe and explain the global distribution of tropical rainforests. However, some candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote irrelevant answers such as describing the shrinking area of tropical rainforest or its temperature and rainfall characteristics.
(b) (i)		Good. Most candidates were able to correctly identify and compare the characteristics of vegetation between a tropical rainforest and an oil palm plantation.

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Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
4. (b) (ii)		Poor. Most candidates did not describe and explain correctly the changes of energy flow within the oil palm plantation ecosystem. Many candidates confused 'nutrient cycle' and 'energy flow'. Some candidates correctly described the changes in trophic levels and food web but without further explaining how such changes affect energy flow.
(c)		Fair. Most candidates explained the reasons of decreasing rainforest area in Indonesia by referring to some of the figures in Table 4c, such as population, GDP per capita, etc. However, many candidates did not refer to the planting of oil palm in Indonesia from Table 4c; instead they gave general explanations like increase in food demand or housing demand.
(d)		Fair. Most candidates only described the general difficulties of limiting the area of oil palm plantations, e.g. corrupt government, lack of monitoring, etc. They should give more specific and in-depth discussion with reference to the information provided. Many candidates focussed their discussion on the conservation of tropical rainforest in Indonesia but not of 'the world'. Most candidates did not arrive at a conclusion in their discussion.

aper 1 Section C

Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
5	8	Poor. In the first part of the question, candidates commonly had inadequate knowledge of the factors leading to the clustering of iron and steel industry in China after the 1970s. Many candidates simply wrote a brief and general description of the spatial changes of iron and steel industry in China from the 1970s until after 2000. Some candidates mentioned the 'open door policy' but without a specific and correct explanation of how the policy has led to the clustering of the iron and steel industry. In the second part of the question, most of the answers given by candidates were either too general or irrelevant. Many candidates only described and explained the multi-point production of IT industry and its advantages. Some candidates related their answers to the IT industry in the US but they generally did not respond to the clustering of the industry; instead they mostly explained the general locational factors affecting the IT industry, such as greenfield sites, etc. Very few candidates explained the clustering of the IT industry in the US with the locational factors mentioned in the first part of the question.

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Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
6	63	Fair. In the first part of the question, the majority of candidates correctly described the physical environment of the Sahel region, mostly illustrated with appropriate examples and climatic data. However, candidates commonly explained only the farming constraints of the region without stating accurately the physical factors leading to frequent famine, such as unreliable rainfall and low carrying capacity of land, etc. In the second part of the question, most candidates only suggested the merits and demerits of genetically modified (GM) crops but did not have a discussion according to the specific situation of the Sahel region, such as nomadic herding as the traditional agriculture, etc. Candidates should also discuss whether GM crops may alleviate the socio-economic factors leading to frequent famine in the Sahel region. Some candidates discussed irrelevant issues, such as the problems brought about by the growing of GM crops, or other more effective measures to alleviate the famine problem. Candidates should make a clear conclusion when discussing whether GM crops may alleviate the famine problem.
7	29	Fair. In the first part of the question, most candidates had a general understanding of the human activities emitting greenhouse gases. However, many candidates did not state the rapid industrial development and urbanisation in less developed countries as the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Some candidates gave irrelevant answers such as the reduction in carbon sink resulted from deforestation, factors of the relocation of industries from more developed countries to less developed countries, etc. Some candidates confused 'greenhouse gases' and 'air pollutants'. In the second part of the question, most candidates raised arguments which were general and superficial, such as corrupt government, lack of capital, low technological level or environmental awareness, etc., showing their inadequate knowledge of the issue. Very few candidates discussed specifically the constraints of developing green energy or energy saving technology. Candidates should also consider the difficulties of cutting emissions in less developed countries brought about by their low per capita emissions.

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General comments and recommendations

1. Candidates should apply appropriate geographical knowledge and concepts in answering the questions. They should not make inappropriate comparisons between two items solely for the purpose of stating their similarities and differences, or raise non-geographical, irrelevant, illogical, or contradictory justifications to discuss the 'pros' and 'cons' of argument. For questions of 'discuss whether', candidates should state clearly their stance and avoid giving an ambiguous conclusion.

2. Candidates should read the questions carefully and be alert to the key terms for a clear understanding of the question requirements.

3. Candidates should become more familiar with extracting relevant evidence from various information and data to support their arguments, so as to improve their performance in relevant questions. They should also organise evidence to systematically correspond with their arguments.

4. Candidates should enhance their knowledge of spatial concepts and apply appropriate geographical concepts and terminology when answering the questions.

5. Candidates should demonstrate their understanding of relevant geographical concepts in answering the questions instead of simply quoting vast amount of information by memory, which may not be relevant to the questions.

6. Candidates should avoid oversimplifying or stereotyping the problems in the less developed countries.

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Paper 2 Section D

Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
1. (a) (i)	38	Excellent. Most candidates correctly identified the rock types. Only a small number of candidates did not distinguish volcanic rock from igneous rocks.
(ii)		Good. Most candidates correctly explained how rock type Y affects the relief in Lantau.
(b) (i)		Fair. Most candidates explained the weathering profile with reference to the characteristic of climate and rock. However, only a small number of candidates correctly explained the differences between the top and bottom layers of the weathering profile.
(ii)		Fair. Most candidates gave only a brief explanation of the formation of tors. Some candidates confused 'weathering' and 'erosion' while some simply repeated the answer in (b) (i).
(iii)		Poor. Most candidates gave only a brief explanation of how landform Z may induce mass wasting. Some candidates wrongly put 'landslide' but not 'rock fall' as the possible mass wasting. Many candidates' understanding of the concepts of 'force of gravity', 'shear stress' and 'shear strength' was not very clear as revealed in the content of their answers.
2. (a)	27	Good. Many candidates correctly explain the summer monsoon system in Hong Kong. Some candidates described the spatial distribution of pressure belts with reference to the location of land and sea. However, some candidates were only vaguely aware of the location of continental Asia and Australasia.
(b)		Fair. Most candidates gave only a brief description and explanation of the conditions for the formation of a typhoon. Some candidates confused the concepts of 'sensible heat' and 'latent heat'.
(c) (i)		Good. Most candidates correctly identified the dates of weather conditions X and Y. Incorrect answers might have been due to candidates' overlooking the changes in weather conditions on two consecutive days.
(ii)		Satisfactory. Most candidates correctly described and explained the changes in weather conditions on two consecutive days. Some candidates did not correctly explain the changes in wind direction, wind speed and rainfall on the second day. Candidates' performance in this part would be directly affected by whether they were able to correctly identify the dates of weather conditions X and Y in (c) (i).
(d)		Poor. Most candidates did not explain in detail or correctly how weather system P may affect the summer monsoon system in Hong Kong.

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Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
3. (a) (i)	8	Fair. Most candidates made a correct comparison with reference to the information in Table 3a. However, quite a number of candidates did not state the fluctuations of throughput of container port in Hong Kong from 2004 to 2016 while some also did not state the decreasing trend of throughput of container port in Hong Kong in 2008.
(ii)		Poor. Most candidates only described the changes in the density of the network of major highways without mentioning the changes in connectivity and the number of nodes.
(iii)		Poor. Many candidates did not state the relationship between the development in the Zhujiang Delta Region and the development of container ports in Shenzhen. Some candidates did not mention the development of container ports in Shenzhen and explained only the increase in vehicle flow.
(b) (i)		Poor. Many candidates gave only a superficial explanation of how the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge may increase the flow of goods.
(ii)		Poor. Most candidates did not state the relationship between the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the sustained development of container port in Hong Kong, especially the influences from the flow of goods in the western part of the Zhujiang Delta Region.
4. (a) (i)	26	Good. Most candidates correctly described the characteristic of 'front end shop, backyard factory'. However, some candidates wrongly interpreted the production operation as 'multi-point production'.
(ii)		Fair. Most candidates correctly explained the favourable factors for the setting up of factories in Shenzhen but only a small number of candidates mentioned the reasons for why Hong Kong takes on the role as the front end shop.
(b) (i)		Good. Most candidates correctly described the changes in major types of industry in Shenzhen.
(ii)		Satisfactory. Many candidates explained appropriately the reasons of the changes in major types of industry in Shenzhen.
(c)		Fair. Most candidates attempted to explain how branding strategy may help to sustain the manufacturing industry in Shenzhen but answers tended to be superficial.

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Paper 2 Section E

Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
5	23	Fair. In the first part of the question, many candidates correctly explained how major faults shaped the physical landscape in Hong Kong. However, some candidates wrongly stated that the major faults in Hong Kong formed block mountains and rift valleys. Some correctly described the relationship between the orientation of major faults and the distribution of physical landscape (such as lowland, valleys and water inlets) in Hong Kong. However, a small number of candidates wrongly stated the presence of faults in Hong Kong as the major condition for the formation of small scale landforms, such as sea caves and sea arches. In the second part of the question, only a small number of candidates discussed appropriately how faulting may affect urban development in Hong Kong. Some produced irrelevant discussions of the impact of underground caverns on urban development. Other candidates confused 'urban development' and 'economic development', hence they made irrelevant discussions of how faulting landscape favours the development of tourism.
6	34	Fair. In the first part of the question, many candidates correctly described and explained the differences in rainfall characteristics between northern and southern China. They also stated the factors affecting rainfall characteristics, such as monsoon, relief, latitude and the influences of land and sea, etc. When explaining the rainfall characteristics, some candidates used incorrect statements, such as 'uneven distribution of rainfall in North China' and 'even distribution of rainfall in South China'. In the second part of the question, many candidates wrongly focussed their answers on the detail of the water transfer scheme, instead of discussing the effectiveness of the scheme in alleviating the water problems brought about by rainfall characteristics. Hence they listed only the basic information of the water transfer scheme, putting aside the discussion of the recent development of the scheme in alleviating the water problems. Some candidates stated only the general causes which defeated the effectiveness of the water transfer scheme, such as high cost, lengthy construction time and absence of inter-provincial cooperation, etc., or irrelevant answers such as corruption, impact on wildlife habitat, etc.
7	11	Poor. In the first part of the question, many candidates did not explain road congestion with regard to the transport patterns in Hong Kong. They instead mentioned irrelevant causes such as bottle neck of roads. In the second part of the question, many candidates showed little understanding of 'electronic road pricing' and misinterpreted it as 'Autotoll' of tunnel fees.

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Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
8	31	Fair. In the first part of the question, many candidates gave the correct reasons of the worsening of the air pollution problem in the Zhujiang Delta Region. Some candidates confused 'greenhouse gases' and 'air pollutants'. Some chronicled the situation starting from the 1980s instead of explaining the situation 'in recent years' as stated in the question. In the second part of the question, many candidates showed little understanding of the cross-border cooperation between Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province. Some misinterpreted cross-border cooperation as inter-provincial cooperation or international cooperation, giving incorrect answers such as 'international disputes defeat the effectiveness of cooperation'.

General comments and recommendations

1. Candidates should study the questions carefully and pay particular attention to key geographical terminology.

2. Candidates should interpret the data and information provided in the questions carefully. They should also apply geographical knowledge and concepts to specific situations or cases in the questions.

3. Candidates should organise their ideas systematically and logically. They should also provide relevant examples to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and spatial location of the cases.

4. In the short essay questions, candidates should put forward concrete arguments and state their stance clearly and logically. They should give clear and definite descriptions, arguments and conclusions in their answers.

5. Candidates should answer the questions appropriately by referring to the directive terms given. They should avoid reproducing the content of textbooks which does not directly answer the questions.

6. Candidates should familiarise themselves with the recent development of geographical issues in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the world as such issues are changing over time. Teachers are also encouraged to keep abreast of the most current geographical issues and incorporate them into their teaching as appropriate.

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