



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2011

GEOGRAPHY

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

At Junior Certificate level, Geography is assessed by means of a single, written final examination of two hours duration with a total allocation of 150 marks.

The paper is divided into two sections, as follows:

- (i) Section 1, in a separate, returnable folder, contains twenty short-answer questions, with an internal choice within three questions at Higher Level and within four questions at Ordinary Level. This section has a total allocation of 60 marks.
- (ii) Section 2 contains five structured questions, of which candidates are required to attempt three questions. This section has a total allocation of 90 marks.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Junior Certificate Geography examination papers and the marking schemes for 2011. These may be downloaded from the website of the State Examinations Commission at www.examinations.ie.

1.2 Candidature

The number and percentage of candidates taking Junior Certificate Geography from the full Junior Certificate cohort for 2008 to 2011, is shown in Table 1 below.

Year	Junior Certificate Candidature	Geography	% of total cohort
2008	55,940	50,967	91.1%
2009	55,557	50,500	90.9%
2010	56,086	51,215	91.3%
2011	56,841	52,104	91.6%

Table 1: Junior Certificate Geography candidature 2008-2011

Table 2 below shows the number of candidates taking Geography at Higher Level and Ordinary Level for the Junior Certificate from 2008 to 2011. The number of candidates taking both the Higher Level and the Ordinary Level has remained constant with a slight change in 2011. The number of candidates taking the Ordinary Level in 2011 decreased by 1.6% from 2010, while there has been a corresponding increase in the Higher Level cohort in the same period.

Year	Total	Ordinary Level		Higher Level	
		Candidature	%	Candidature	%
2008	50,967	10,859	21.3%	40,108	78.7%
2009	50,500	11,073	21.9%	39,427	78.1%
2010	51,215	10,925	21.3%	40,290	78.7%
2011	52,104	10,266	19.7%	41,838	80.3%

Table 2: Junior Certificate Geography candidature (Ordinary Level and Higher Level) 2008-2011

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

The paper is divided into two sections, as follows:

Section 1, in a separate, returnable folder, contains twenty short-answer questions, with an internal choice within four questions. This section has a total allocation of 60 marks.

Section 2 contains five structured questions, of which the candidate is required to attempt three questions. This section has a total allocation of 90 marks.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

A total of 10,266 candidates sat the examination at Ordinary Level in 2011.

The final results were as follows:

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	N/G	EFNG
2008	10,859	9.0	36.7	31.9	77.6	17.7	3.8	0.9	0.0	4.7
2009	11,073	8.4	33.9	35.5	77.8	17.8	3.5	0.9	0.0	4.4
2010	10,925	8.7	35.4	32.5	76.6	18.1	4.0	1.2	0.1	5.3
2011	10,266	8.2	36.4	33.4	78.0	18.0	3.4	0.6	0.0	3.9

Table 3: Grade outcomes Junior Certificate Geography (Ordinary Level) 2008-2011. (Grade Figures are percentages)

Results in 2011 were generally in line with the outcomes in previous years.

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

The following commentary, which is based on the reports of examiners, should be read in conjunction with the relevant examination papers and marking schemes. These are available on www.examinations.ie.

Table 4 below shows the frequency of attempts and average mark achieved per question. The data in this table and statistics relating to frequency of attempts and average mark achieved per question are based on an analysis of a sample of scripts.

Question No.	Attempts (%)	Rank order	Average mark (out of 60)	Topic
Section 1 Folder	100%	Compulsory	45	General
Section 2			Average mark (out of 30)	
Question 1	69%	4th	15	Physical Geography
Question 2	75%	2nd	18	Ordnance Survey map
Question 3	70%	3rd	12	Economic activities
Question 4	87%	1st	18	Geographical mix
Question 5	62%	5th	17	Aerial photograph

Table 4: Junior Certificate Geography (Ordinary Level) 2011 - Frequency of attempts and average mark by question based on a sample of scripts.

An analysis of candidates' responses to individual questions, as reported by examiners, is outlined below.

2.3.1 Section 1 – Short Questions

Attempt Rate: 100% (from sample)

Average mark: 45 out of 60 marks

All candidates attempted the Short Questions section. Performance in this section showed an improvement on previous years with candidates achieving an average of 45 marks out of a total of 60 marks. The average mark provided candidates with 30% of their overall mark. Examiners reported that mathematical charts were well answered, while Economic and Physical Geography questions presented difficulties for a small number of candidates in this section.

Examiners noted a number of issues, including the following:

- Question 2: A number of candidates did not choose the fold mountain as the correct answer.
- Question 9B: Most candidates opted to answer 9A. In 9B, the skill of measuring distance on the Ordnance Survey map proved challenging for some candidates.

- Question 13: A significant number of candidates confused primary and secondary economic activity.
- Question 14: In general, candidates did not perform well in this question.

2.3.2 Section 2 – Structured Questions

Almost all candidates attempted at least three questions with the majority attempting four or five. There was a broad spread of attempts across all five questions. Almost half the candidates attempted more than three questions. Analysis of the sample indicated that 18% of candidates attempted four questions, while a further 31% attempted all five questions.

Question 1 Physical Geography

Attempt Rate: 69% (from sample)

Average mark: 15 out of 30 marks

This was the fourth most popular question with the second lowest average mark. Overall, while the answers in Physical Geography were generally satisfactory, landforms continue to present difficulties for many candidates.

- A. This was generally well answered. In part (i), the majority of candidates named a correct rock and rock group. Part (ii) involved candidates presenting a description of limestone rock. The majority displayed a basic understanding of the formation process and a minority displayed a greater understanding of the process. Part (ii) was very well answered by most candidates. Average marks of 6 - 7 out of a total of 10 marks were common.
- B. In this question, features formed by the sea in coastal areas were the most popular, particularly sea stacks. Diagrams of coastal features in part (ii) were well drawn and explanations of the formation of coastal features were of a high standard. Very few candidates attempted ice-related features (glacial). Where ice-related features were named, diagrams were frequently poorly drawn or not drawn at all, and explanations of formation were not fully developed. A minority of candidates chose river features, such as waterfalls, which were not asked for in the question.
- C. Both parts (i) and (ii) were well answered by many candidates and responses demonstrated a very good knowledge of the process of weathering by freeze-thaw action. Examiners reported that the given diagram assisted in eliciting detailed responses from candidates. Many candidates were awarded 80% of the marks in this question.

Question 2 Ordnance Survey Map

Attempt Rate: 75% (from sample)

Average mark: 18 out of 30 marks

This was the second most popular question and was one of two questions with the highest average mark.

- A. Examiners reported positively on the high quality of sketch maps presented, as a consequence of which most candidates achieved full marks. The main areas where candidates did lose marks included failure to show and label an item, drawing only a section of the map, or not including a frame on the sketch.
- B. Responses by candidates in both parts (i) and (ii) were generally satisfactory, with most achieving at least half marks. In part (i), almost all candidates gave one reason, mainly referring to a coastal location, while a significant proportion also gave a second reason, commonly referring to roads. Many candidates developed the named explanation. In part (ii), most candidates referred to mountains as the reason for the absence of roads and houses. However, few candidates developed their explanations in this part of the question.
- C. Examiners reported that candidates responded positively to the use of a letter or email format to present their answers. The majority of candidates named four attractions. Few, however, developed all four attractions resulting in loss of marks. Despite the instruction to use evidence from the Ordnance Survey map, many candidates did not do so. Average marks of 7 or 8 out of a total of 10 marks were common.

Question 3 Economic Activities

Attempt Rate: 70% (from sample)

Average mark: 12 out of 30 marks

This was the third most popular question and had the lowest average mark of all questions. Examiners reported that limited development of answers in each part of the question was the main factor contributing to the low average mark.

- A. The majority of candidates were challenged by part (i) of this question. A lack of understanding of the Water Cycle resulted in candidates confusing the sequencing of the water cycle. In a minority of cases, candidates explanations were excellent. Almost all candidates named two uses for water in part (ii), while the majority named one way people pollute water supplies. Only a few candidates provided sufficient explanation and development of their responses.
- B. Examiners noted that approximately half of the candidates correctly named a factory they had studied. In part (ii), most candidates named at least one input for the named factory. Information relating to processes and outputs of the named factory was, however, limited. In part (iii), only a minority of candidates showed an understanding of the term 'footloose industry'.

- C. This question was not well answered. In part (i), few candidates named either the machines or the processes in which the machines were involved. Reference to extraction being quicker was the most common response. Candidates, however, provided limited, if any, explanation. A lack of explanation was also noted in part (ii) of this question. Total marks awarded here rarely exceeded 4 out of the 10 available marks.

Question 4 Geographical Mix

Attempt Rate: 87% (from sample)

Average mark: 18 out of 30 marks

This was the most popular question and was one of two questions with the highest average mark. Even though candidates were only required to answer three of the four parts here, examiners reported that many candidates attempted all four parts.

- A. This question was attempted by nearly all candidates answering Question 4. It was very well answered across parts (i) to (iv). The average marks awarded ranged from 8 to 10 out of a total of 10 available marks.
- B. Most candidates correctly stated a cause and effect of acid rain. The explanation of each was, however, limited in many cases and missing in a minority of cases. Description in part (ii) was also limited. Some answers dealt with environmental issues in general, and ignored the question's focus on climate change and global warming. Examiners' reports suggested that it was likely that the Green Schools campaign impacted positively on candidate responses.
- C. In part (i), most candidates named two types of damage caused by earthquakes. However, few candidates provided any explanation, as was required by the question. Part (ii) was well answered. Candidates demonstrated an awareness of global development issues and of the associated types of aid.
- D. Part (i) was well answered. Candidates' responses regarding naming valid reasons and suggestions in parts (ii) and (iii) were satisfactory. However, examiners noted that there was little development or elaboration of responses in evidence.

Question 5 Aerial Photograph

Attempt Rate: 62% (from sample)

Average mark: 17 out of 30 marks

This was the least popular question and had the third highest average mark.

- A. Examiners reported that candidates generally selected a suitable location and the majority used the correct terminology for naming this location. In part (ii), candidates furnished explanations for one reason for the chosen location but the second reason tended to be not as well developed and, in some instances, was not developed at all. The most common reasons given for choice of location for the public swimming pool and leisure centre were proximity to the town and accessibility of the site. Part (iii) proved challenging for a number of candidates.
- B. Examiners reported that many candidates were unable to successfully name and locate two land-uses. Those candidates who did correctly name two land-uses also successfully stated locations for each and had no difficulty explaining the benefits of one of the named land-uses.
- C. The standard of sketches presented by candidates was good. Frames were included and the required features were marked satisfactorily in the majority of cases. The most common errors included failure to draw a frame or to have correct proportions, failure to include the whole area of the photograph, and indicating the location of a land-use but not drawing its borders/limits. A small number of candidates drew a sketch of the Ordnance Survey map instead of the aerial photograph.

2.4 Conclusions

- Many candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the course content and an excellent level of preparedness for the examination
- Some candidates who presented at Ordinary Level would have been capable of taking the examination at Higher Level
- The use of visual stimuli throughout the examination paper facilitated candidates engagement with the examination
- Candidates presented sketch maps of a high quality with many candidates achieving full marks
- The performance of candidates in Section 1 (short-answer questions) showed an improvement on previous years with candidates achieving an average of 45 marks
- The element of choice in the Geographical Mix question benefited all candidates
- Some candidates found the issue of measurements on the Ordnance Survey map challenging
- While the responses in Physical Geography were generally satisfactory, landforms continue to present difficulties for a large number of candidates
- The failure of some candidates to develop simple points of argument is the single greatest cause of loss of marks in the examination
- A significant number of candidates attempted more than the required number of questions
- On the basis of the scripts presented, it appeared that some candidates may not have utilised the full time allocation available to complete the examination.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

It is recommended that teachers:

- ensure that students are familiar with a variety of graphical aids, including charts, graphs, photographs, and satellite imagery
- continue to provide opportunities for students to practise drawing sketches of both Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photographs, and to emphasise elements such as frame, key and correct proportions
- encourage students, where appropriate, to develop their responses beyond simple statements, through explanations, descriptions and the use of examples
- encourage students to read the full examination paper at the start of the examination, before attempting any question
- encourage students to answer all parts of the attempted questions
- ensure students are familiar with the requirements of the written examination and provide students with opportunities to practise for the examination using past examination papers and the published marking scheme as a resource and a guide. These are available on the SEC website www.examinations.ie
- encourage students to use the full allocation of time allowed for the examination.

It is recommended that students:

- develop their responses to questions, where appropriate, with explanations, descriptions and examples
- familiarise themselves with the overall structure and layout of the examination paper. To this end, students should ensure that they are familiar with past examination papers and marking schemes. These are available on the SEC website www.examinations.ie
- read all the examination questions carefully at the beginning of the examination to ensure that they are responding precisely to what is asked of them
- use the full allocation of time allowed in the examination
- give careful consideration to the level at which they take the examination.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

The paper is divided into two sections, as follows:

Section 1, in a separate, returnable folder, contains twenty short-answer questions, with an internal choice within three questions. This section has a total allocation of 60 marks.

Section 2 contains five structured questions, of which the candidate is required to attempt three questions. This section has a total allocation of 90 marks.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

A total of 41,838 candidates sat the examination at this level in 2011. The final results were as follows:

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	N/G	EFNG
2008	40,108	8.5	34.3	35.5	78.3	19.3	2.1	0.2	0.0	2.3
2009	39,427	8.3	33.4	35.2	76.9	20.8	2.1	0.1	0.0	2.2
2010	40,290	9.5	33.3	33.0	75.8	20.9	3.0	0.2	0.0	3.2
2011	41,838	9.1	34.4	32.5	76.0	20.1	3.6	0.4	0.0	4.0

Table 5: Grade outcomes - Junior Certificate Geography (Higher Level) 2008-2011. (Grade figures are given as percentages)

Outcomes in 2011 were generally in line with previous years.

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

The following commentary, which is based on the reports of examiners, should be read in conjunction with the relevant examination papers and marking schemes. These are available on www.examinations.ie.

Table 6 below shows the frequency of attempts and average mark achieved per question. The data in this table and statistics relating to frequency of attempts and average mark achieved per question are based on an analysis of a sample of scripts.

Question No.	Attempts (%)	Rank order	Average mark (out of 60)	Topic
Section 1 Folder	100%	Compulsory	45	General
Section 2			Average mark (out of 30)	
Question 1	62%	3rd	18	Physical Geography
Question 2	59%	4th	15	Population and transport
Question 3	85%	1st	20	Geographical Mix
Question 4	41%	5th	14	Economic activity and development
Question 5	78%	2nd	15	Aerial photograph and Ordnance Survey map

Table 6: Junior Certificate Geography (Higher Level) 2011 - Frequency of attempts and average mark by question based on a sample of scripts

An analysis of candidates' responses to individual questions, as reported by examiners, is outlined below.

3.3.1 Section 1 - Short Questions

Attempt Rate: 100% (from sample)

Average mark: 45 out of 60 marks

All candidates attempted Section 1. The average mark provided candidates with 30% of their overall mark. Generally, these questions were successfully attempted by the majority of candidates. Examiners noted the following:

- Question 1: The majority of candidates successfully distinguished between the inner and outer core.
- Question 5: Most candidates correctly named isobars. Some, however, were unable to distinguish between isotherms and isohyets.
- Question 6: A number of variations of the name of the Stevenson Screen were presented by a minority of candidates. Some candidates were unable to state what is measured by a hygrometer.
- Question 9A: Some candidates were unable to identify the Sahel and failed to name two solutions to desertification, as required in the question.
- Question 9B: Naming three types of aid proved difficult for some candidates.
- Question 15: In general, this question was not well answered, with few candidates naming the two age groups used to calculate the dependency ratio.
- Question 17: A small number of candidates named actual place-names from the map instead of a settlement pattern.

3.3.2 Section 2 – Structured Questions

Almost all candidates attempted at least three questions with many attempting four or five. While there was a broad spread of attempts across all five questions, Question 3, the Geographical Mix question, was the most popular question.

Question 1 Physical Geography

Attempt Rate: 62% (from sample)

Average mark: 18 out of 30 marks

This question was the third most popular question and had the second highest average mark.

- A. Most candidates were able to correctly identify the category of rock and give a correct location for it. While many candidates named an underground feature in a Karst region and provided an accompanying labeled diagram in part (iii), some neglected to refer to formation.
- B. Responses to part (i) and (ii) were somewhat uneven with some candidates having difficulty differentiating between the fault and focus, and candidates naming cities instead of countries as the question required. In part (iii), the majority of candidates presented a good description of building earthquake-proof buildings. A small number of candidates presented rather vague responses here.
- C. The majority of candidates correctly named the two major atmospheric gases. Responses in part (ii) were less successful. Many candidates referred to the ozone layer, both in their diagram and in their explanation, while others referred to acid rain. A number of candidates failed to display an understanding of the greenhouse effect. Part (iii) was well answered by most candidates.

Question 2 Population and Transport

Attempt Rate: 59% (from sample)

Average mark: 15 out of 30 marks

This was the second least popular question and scored the second lowest average mark.

- A. Parts (i), (ii) and (iii) were well answered by most candidates. A very small minority of candidates dealt with reasons for population growth, rather than problems resulting from population growth as required in the question.
- B. Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the geographical terms in part (i). Only a minority of candidates failed to differentiate between immigration and emigration. In part (ii), some candidates failed to name a valid example and answers were not developed sufficiently. Some candidates

misinterpreted the question and, as a result, discussion in a number of cases dealt with the results of migration rather than the causes of it.

- C. This question was not well answered. Many candidates did not name an example of a transport network and responses were insufficiently developed. A significant number of candidates failed to attempt this part of the question.

Question 3 Geographical Mix

Attempt Rate: 85% (from sample)

Average mark: 20 out of 30 marks

Candidates are required to answer three out of four parts in the Geographical Mix question. This question continues to be the most popular as its variety of topics gives candidates an extensive choice. Many candidates attempted all four parts but in general, Part A was the least popular.

- A. This question was well answered by a minority of candidates who displayed a good knowledge of the topic. Some candidates were unable to make any attempt at describing soil composition.
- B. The standard of sketch maps was generally satisfactory. The most common error was a failure to show the entire route of the Dingle Way.
- C. In general, the responses of candidates who chose coastal features were of a much higher standard than the responses of candidates who chose glacial features. With regard to both coastal and glacial features, many candidates focused on description of the named feature rather than on an explanation of the formation and, in many cases, there was insufficient reference to the processes involved.
- D. This question was answered well with candidates averaging between 8 or 10 marks. Candidates displayed a clear understanding of the term 'life expectancy'. Part (iii) elicited many good explanations for the longer life expectancy experienced in certain parts of the world.

Question 4 Economic Activity and Development

Attempt Rate: 41% (from sample)

Average mark: 14 out of 30 marks

This was the least popular question and had the lowest average mark. Examiners reported that some candidates were challenged by the range of topics and that responses lacked satisfactory development.

- A. A minority of candidates displayed a good knowledge of the required case studies on the location of industry. In general, candidates named the factors influencing the location of industry but did not sufficiently explain these

factors. Candidates were unable to identify a conflict in part (ii) and where a conflict was identified, answers were not adequately developed.

- B. In part (i), some candidates confused examples of tourist regions with types of tourist regions. Parts (ii) and (iii) were generally well answered by most, with candidates displaying a thorough understanding of both the positive and negative effects of tourism. Some candidates did not refer to examples as the question required.
- C. In general, candidates' responses here were unsatisfactory. While the majority named a developing region, many did not give the required number of reasons as to why the named region was not as economically developed as other regions. Many candidates referred to the results of the region's under-development rather than the causes and there was insufficient detail in their explanations.

Question 5 Aerial Photograph and Ordnance Survey Map

Attempt Rate: 78% (from sample)

Average mark: 15 out of 30 marks

The aerial photograph and Ordnance Survey map question continued to be a very popular option. It was the second most popular question after the Geographical Mix question and had the third highest average mark.

- A. The sketch maps in general were of a high standard with many candidates achieving full marks. Some candidates had difficulty drawing the sketch to a reduced scale while maintaining proportion. The use of a dot or symbol to indicate an area instead of indicating the footprint of the area, and incorrect proportions for the frame resulted in a loss of marks for some candidates. A very small number of candidates drew a sketch of the Ordnance Survey map instead of the aerial photograph.
- B. This question was not well answered. Some candidates failed to give the required three reasons for the development of Dingle at this site. In other instances, candidates gave reasons, but provided limited explanations. In many cases, no map evidence was provided to support reasons and explanations.
- C. While in the majority of cases candidates gave reasons for the lack of settlement, explanations were, however, generally inadequate. Again, there was limited Ordnance Survey map evidence provided to support explanations.

3.4 Conclusions

- Many candidates demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the Geography syllabus and very high levels of preparedness for the examination
- Sketch maps were generally of a high standard
- The Geographical Mix question was the most popular question on the examination due, presumably, to its variety of topics offering an extensive choice
- The geographical skills of some candidates would benefit from further development. It was noted that a number of candidates demonstrated difficulties with basic skills in map reading such as, for example, grid references and drawing sketches to a reduced scale while maintaining proportion
- Some candidates failed to display an understanding of the greenhouse effect
- A minority of candidates did not refer to examples as the question required, particularly in relation to the required case studies
- In some instances, candidate responses contained insufficient detail and, in many cases, no Ordnance Survey map and aerial photograph evidence was provided to support reasons and explanations given
- Some candidates demonstrated poor examination techniques, including, for example, attempting more than the required number of questions, failing to answer all of the required parts within individual questions, or leaving sections unanswered
- Examiners reported that some candidates would have been better suited to the Ordinary Level examination as they were not prepared for the more difficult concepts encountered at Higher Level.

3.5 Recommendations for Teachers and Students

It is recommended that teachers:

- provide opportunities for students to interpret and use information from various stimuli. These could include charts, diagrams, tables, maps of various scales etc.
- continue to provide opportunities for students to apply and practise a variety of geographical skills, including map reading and photograph interpretation across syllabus content
- ensure that students are familiar with the terminology used in past examination papers
- place further emphasis on case studies within the teaching and learning environment
- ensure that students are aware of the difference between description, explanation and effects. To this end, students could be encouraged to develop descriptions and explanations both in their class work and in their homework
- encourage students to read the full examination paper at the start of the examination, taking note of key words and question cues, prior to selecting any questions. Particular attention should be given to common question cues such as ‘explain’, ‘name’, ‘show’ and ‘label’
- encourage students to attempt all parts of the selected questions
- encourage students to familiarise themselves with past examination papers and marking schemes which are available on the SEC website www.examinations.ie
- advise students to avail of the full allocation of time allowed for the examination.

It is recommended that students:

- practise drawing simple annotated diagrams to illustrate various geographical features and phenomena on the Junior Certificate Syllabus
- develop answers appropriately, when required, with explanations, descriptions and examples. In this context students should take cognizance of the mark allocation for each part of a question
- read all the examination questions carefully at the beginning of the examination before attempting any question
- use past examination papers and marking schemes to familiarise themselves with the overall structure and layout of the examination paper. These are available on the State Examinations Commission website www.examinations.ie
- make full use of the allocated time for the examination