



LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

1999

GEOGRAPHY

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

GEOGRAPHY - HIGHER LEVEL

1. Structure of Examination

This is a terminal written examination.

The examination paper is structured as follows:

Section A	Question 1 – Mapwork
Section B	Question 2 – Physical Geography [four internal options] Question 3 – Social Geography [four internal options] Question 4 – Economic Geography [four internal options]
Section C	Question 5 – Regional Geography [four internal options]

Candidates are required to attempt Question 1, one option from Question 5 and 1 option from each of 2 of the Questions 2,3 and 4.

2. Performance of Candidates

22,902 candidates attempted the paper. This compared with 21,486 in 1998 and followed the upward trend of recent years. For comparative purposes see Appendix I.

3. Analysis of Answering

1.1 Section A Question 1 – Mapwork

In answers to part (a), many students failed to link up human activities with the river. There was a tendency also to identify a list of activities, but then to offer limited development of arguments.

Examiners noted that many candidates identified the power stations as being hydro-electric in type – an error in map reading. Grid references remain an area of surprisingly common weakness.

In answers to part (b) of the question, arguments concerning the positive/negative aspects of building the bridge were in general adequately presented. Many candidates however did not deal adequately with the requirement to justify their chosen locational argument.

3.2 *Section B*

Question 2 – Physical Geography

Option (a)

This was a very popular option. In general, in part (i), candidates dealt well with the topic of chemical weathering.

In part (ii), answers were weak, as little knowledge was generally evident concerning stone monuments. The concept of heritage “preservation” fared similarly.

Examiners in general regarded this question as somewhat specialised.

Option (b)

This was one of the most popularly answered questions and marks attained were generally high. Candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of glaciation. However, some failed to distinguish precisely between upland and lowland landforms in presenting their arguments.

Option (c)

This was not a popular option.

In part (I), there was a tendency to refer to causes of climatic change, rather than the challenges, which they present.

In part (ii), many were unable to marshal arguments relating to three human impacts resulting from changing weather patterns.

Examiners advised that two human impacts would have been a more accessible demand.

Option (d)

This was not a popular option and answers referred most frequently to earthquakes and volcanoes.

Knowledge of Plate Tectonic was generally satisfactory, but the concept of distribution of these phenomena over time and space was often absent from the answers.

3.3 *Question 3 – Social Geography*

Option (a)

This was the most popular question in this section.

In part (I), the marks attained were generally high. The most common weakness in answering concerned the justification of the suggested location for the housing development.

In part (ii), while candidates generally addressed the concept of “function”, most dealt less than adequately with the idea of planning.

Answering of part (iii) of this question focused very often on traffic issues in general, with reference to either the map or the photograph, rather than to both. Examiners advised that this part of the question was demanding.

Option (b)

This was an unpopular option. Answering varied in quality, but marks attained were generally not high.

Option (c)

This option, focusing on racial and ethnic variables in human societies, was not a popular one.

Northern Ireland featured strongly as an exemplar in answering.

Option (d)

Candidates seldom attempted this. While the answering of part (I) was satisfactory, the answering of parts (ii) and (iii) was often very superficial. Marks attained were generally not high.

3.4 *Question 4 – Economic Geography*

Option (a)

This was not popular. Answers tended to treat the selected industry in general terms, but treated the concept of locational factors only poorly. Marks attained were generally not high.

Option (b)

This option was not popular either. In most instances, there was inadequate development of the points of argument. Marks attained were generally not high.

Option (c)

This was the most popular option in this question.

Quite a number of candidates gained full marks.

Examiners reported that the quality of fieldwork evidenced by answers has improved very considerably over the years.

The weakest answering was usually in response to parts (iii), (iv) and (v).

Option (d)

This was the second most popular option in this question.

Most candidates framed their answers using Norway as a setting.

Most dealt adequately with the economic benefits of the biotic industries referred to but not with the social benefits.

3.5 *Section C – Question 5 – Regional Geography*

Option (a)

This was reasonably popular. The majority of candidates used Spain as one setting in their answers, with France, Italy, Switzerland and Ireland featuring as comparative settings.

Very often, the causes of the growth of tourism were focused upon, rather than the significance, as required by the question. Examiners reported a great degree of repetition in answers.

Examiners were generally of the opinion that the question was demanding of candidates, by seeking arguments related to 3 countries.

Marks attained were generally not high.

Option (b)

Examiners again commented on the demanding nature of this option. Marks attained were usually not high. Some answers confused Primary, Secondary and Tertiary economic activities, with Tertiary being particularly weak.

Knowledge of Ireland as a setting here was generally unsatisfactory.

Option (c)

Answering of this question was generally satisfactory, but few candidates dealt with the core/periphery concept adequately in 3 countries as required.

Answers concerning the “Celtic Tiger” in part (ii) were usually satisfactory.

Option (d)

Understanding of the concept of “geographical region” in part (I) was generally very good.

In part (ii), many candidates did not address their answering to either Scandinavia or Iberia as macro-regions, but rather to regions within individual countries. The idea of “distinctiveness” of regions was generally an area of weakness in answering.

Many examiners reported that Italy was presented as a part of Iberia – clearly a serious error.

4. Overall Commentary

The 1999 Leaving Certificate Higher Level paper was set in accordance with the syllabus content and the required examination format.

A number of aspects of the paper do however merit comment.

The setting of the mandatory Question 1 in two parts did not facilitate differentiation of answering and of marking to the extent that is possible in a three-or-more-part format. It is therefore intended to opt in 2000 and thereafter for a three-or-more part format for this question.

It is agreed that from 2000 onwards the bulk of marks in all questions will be allocated to core syllabus concepts.

5. Recommendations for Teachers and Students

- ◆ Continued focus upon ensuring adequate basic map-reading skills [grid references, symbols, etc.] is a priority.
- ◆ Encouraging students to envisage themselves as geographers in addressing putative real-world issues or scenarios [as in Questions 1 and 3(a) in 1999] is essential in making their experience of geography relevant and interesting.
- ◆ In studying the Regional Geography of Europe as prescribed in the syllabus, an appropriately varied approach needs to be ensured. Students should study the concept of geographical region on a variety of scales, both intra- and inter-nationally.
- ◆ Students should study an appropriately broad range of European countries as prescribed and should not restrict themselves to any presumed subset of these.

APPENDIX I

Candidate Performance

Geography

Leaving Certificate - Higher Level

in years 1997-1999

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1997	20286	7.1%	27.6%	37.5%	23.0%	4.0%	0.7%	0.1%
Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1998	21486	6.1%	25.2%	38.9%	24.3%	4.8%	0.7%	0.1%
Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1999	22,902	6.6%	25.0%	39.3%	24.4%	4.0%	0.6%	0.1%

GEOGRAPHY - ORDINARY LEVEL

1. Introduction

The examination was taken by 7,223 candidates, almost one thousand students less than in 1998. This reduction is accounted for by the increased numbers attempting the Higher Level Geography paper in 1999. The total number of students taking Geography at senior level remains at a high level.

2. The Performance of Candidates

The results were very much in line with previous years. The wide choice, relevance and variety of questions gave students plenty of scope to display their knowledge. The small increase in B grades from 1998 and 1997 suggests that more students performed at a higher level than in previous years, especially in the compulsory Ordnance Survey question. The high standard of sketch maps in the photograph and map questions was commented on favourably by examiners.

9.6% of candidates achieved an A grade in 1999. 76.5% of candidates gained a grade C or higher, 19.3% scored a grade D and 4.1% scored an E grade or lower.

See Appendix II for detailed breakdown of grades.

The Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate Geography examination requires candidates to attempt five questions out of eighteen with the Ordnance Survey question being the only compulsory one. Great care is taken in the wording of questions to avoid ambiguity and to allow them to be accessible to all candidates at this level. Topicality and relevance are stressed, where possible, to engage students' interest. However, this has to be achieved within the context of a dated syllabus currently under review.

The improved layout of the paper, the clarification of question choice in recent years and the use of question headings have greatly facilitated students and examiners.

3. Analysis of Answering

Question 1 Ordnance Survey

This compulsory question was attempted by more than 98.6% of candidates and was accessible to practically all candidates. It was considered very fair by examiners and many candidates gained high marks.

- i) Sketch maps were well drawn and features were easily identified. The ferry terminal was the feature causing most difficulty.
- ii) Some students lost marks here as many failed to comprehend the word 'navigable'. There was plenty of map evidence available but it was not always used.
- iii) This was well answered and a variety of evidence was used. Quite a few candidates confused the grid reference for the town with many reversing the co-ordinates.

Physical Geography

This section is continuing to be a popular one with many candidates taking their fifth question from this section. 25% of candidates attempted one question from this section, and 23% attempted two questions.

The 60\20 mark allocation was welcomed by examiners and achieved a good balance of grades.

Question 2 Coastal Landforms

This was the most popular Physical Geography question.

- i) Many excellent, well-annotated diagrams were drawn. The features most commonly chosen were the Sea Arch, Sea Stack and Sea Cliff. A good understanding of geographical terms was evident and named examples were often given.
- ii) Transport and Employment were the benefits most often identified. More able candidates scored very well here but some candidates did not attempt this part of the question.

Question 3 Glaciation

The standard of answering on this topic was remarkably high this year and it was the second most popular physical geography question.

- i) Diagrams were of a high standard with good usage and understanding of basic geographical terms being displayed. Corrie, U shaped valley and Arete were the most frequently chosen landforms.
- ii) This section was less well answered. Marks were lost when many students failed to develop points. Tourism, routeways and building materials were the economic benefits most often selected.

Question 4 Earth movements

This question was chosen by a minority of candidates. Earthquakes and Volcanoes were selected more often than Fold Mountains. Many candidates described the effects of earthquakes rather than their causes and often the diagrams presented were of poor quality. Good examples of both Earthquakes and Volcanoes were often given.

Question 5 The physical world

This was the least popular question in Physical Geography. River Erosion and the Burren statements were well attempted. Candidates often answered one option quite well and then struggled with the second option. There was a tendency towards vague generalisations rather than specific geographical information.

Social Geography

Question 6 Aerial Photography

Apart from the compulsory map question, this was the most frequently attempted question on the entire paper and was chosen by over 75% of candidates. The quality of the aerial photograph came in for some criticism. It is intended to use better quality photographs, as they become available.

- i) The fact that students were requested to draw a sketch map was welcomed by examiners and seemed to suit candidates. The sketch maps were well drawn and good use was made of legends or keys.
- ii) Most correctly identified a location for a car park as required but many lost marks for not developing their reasons for their choice of location.
- iii) The term 'migrate' was, in many cases, poorly understood and many candidates were only able to give one reason rather than two regarding the usefulness of sources.

Question 7 World Hunger

- i) Most candidates simply repeated the data given in the pie chart and did not gain many marks for describing the pattern shown.
- ii) The descriptions of War, Rapid Population Growth and Poor Farming Methods were understood but were rarely linked in with the concept of world hunger. The supplied list of factors helped candidates.

Question 8 Population studies

- i) Candidates found it difficult to outline three problems and most quoted Dublin as their only example.
- ii) Many candidates strayed from the point and concentrated on problems in Rural areas in general rather than those caused by out migration. The term "out migration" was often poorly understood.

Question 9 Social Geography Issues

The series of four statements, despite being very topical, were not very popular choices. Migration, population growth in cities and in the developing world as well as urban sprawl are central geographical concerns. In general, the standard of answering in this question did not reflect this. Much irrelevant material was included.

Economic Geography

Question 10 Manufacturing Industry

- i) Despite being able to outline the factors of industrial location many students did not apply it to a specific example. A limited number of candidates used the information they had gathered on factory visits or projects they had undertaken.
- ii) This part was answered very well with a good understanding of the various forms of industrial pollution being evident.

Question 11 Transport

The standard of answering was impressive here. Both parts were easily accessible to candidates. Some candidates, however, provided long lists rather than developing points made.

Question 12 Economic Geography Issues

Again the four statements on the 'Celtic Tiger', oil as a resource, acid rain and farming as a system were not often attempted by students, despite their undoubted relevance, and this question proved to be the least popular in the examination. Farming as a system was the most popular choice of those who attempted this question.

Question 13 Fieldwork

37% of students chose this topic. The type of fieldwork varied widely but the questions were well answered. It was evident that a great deal of practical geography is being attempted.. Many candidates wrote a huge amount on this question and this may have restricted their time on other questions.

Regional and World Geography

Question 14 Types of Problem Regions

This was not a very popular question and the Sambre-Meuse in Belgium and Mezzogiorno regions in Italy were treated more often and more successfully than the Randstad in the Netherlands. Most candidates found it difficult to offer solutions to the problems in the Sambre-Meuse area.

Question 15

i) This question was chosen by over one third of candidates. This year the candidates were asked to divide two countries into regions from a list of five. In many cases only one country and one sketch map were given. Over dependence on one country is discouraged.

ii) Many excellent answers were given. However, some candidates dealt with the whole country rather than with specific regions as required.

Question 16

Six factors affecting Irish agriculture were listed and candidates were asked to select four. There was an even distribution of factors selected. A number failed to relate their answer to Irish Agriculture while other answers were poorly developed.

Question 17

The most popular and well answered of the four statements on Europe was the section on Tourism in Mediterranean Regions. The least popular was the statement on the river Rhine.

Question 18

i) The questions on locational geography were very poorly answered and candidates who wish to attempt this question should be better prepared for the world map aspect of the question.

ii) Of the areas listed that made world headlines Northern Ireland issues were the most often attempted and many candidates gained full marks. This was welcomed by examiners.

Those who attempted this section often referred to Kosovo again showing good knowledge of topical issues. The problems associated with some refugees were well understood but the benefits refugees bring to the host country were less well understood. The term 'host country' was poorly understood in many cases.

4. Recommendations \ Conclusions

This examination provided students with a fair and varied test of their knowledge, skills and attitudes in Geography. The Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate examination in Geography in 1999 covered such key topics as Graphical and Map Skills, Earthquakes and Coastal Features, Energy and Urban Transport issues, the 'Celtic Tiger', Population and Migration studies. As well as strong World, European and local dimensions also featured.

- The questions on map work and aerial photographs remain very popular and the drawing of sketch maps, in particular, impressed examiners. Using map and photo evidence to develop answers and greater use and understanding of grid references are encouraged. It is hoped to improve the quality of the aerial photographs, by using more oblique photographs, as they become available.
- The fieldwork question, though far from perfect in terms of assessment, remains a popular option. It is heartening that 37.6% attempted this question.
- A number of candidates did not attempt five questions. This obviously has an impact on grade patterns. The obligation of doing a Regional question was not fulfilled in a minority of cases. While this problem was less frequent than in previous years, there is still cause for some concern. Perhaps candidates could be encouraged not to leave the Regional question until last in order to ensure that it is attempted. Over dependence on the study one country should be avoided.
- Those who attempt the World Section in Question 18 should improve their locational knowledge of the globe and keep up to date with major world issues.
- The dated syllabus is tending to limit students access to current ideas and information in the subject. There has been a general welcome among examiners this year, and in previous years, for relevance and topicality of the examination.

APPENDIX II

Candidates' performance for years 1997-1999

1997

No. of Candidates	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	N/G
8,409	3	4.5	6.6	10.4	11.7	11.7	11.6	11.2	8.7	7	7.5	4.7	1.2	0.2

1998

No. of Candidates	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	N/G
8,205	3.2	5.5	6.9	10.7	12.2	11.6	11.7	10.4	7.5	6.1	7.4	4.6	1.8	0.4

1999

No. of Candidates	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	N/G
7,223	4.3	5.3	10.4	11.4	11.0	14.3	11.6	8.2	9.5	5.5	4.3	2.8	1.1	0.2