

Commentary on candidate 2 evidence

Selected examples of marked questions for this candidate have been chosen to illustrate some key points.

The candidate produced only one essay in section 3, which was of a low standard. They did not attempt a second essay, which might have been because they ran out of time. Although there was an increase in the length of the exam for session 2017-18, only a very small minority of candidates did not attempt both essays.

Although many candidates did not perform particularly well in the essays, this was mainly due to lack of quality, depth of response, or the amount of detail provided.

For section 2, the candidate was awarded 11 marks out of 20 available marks, and an overall mark of 45 out of 100 available marks for the entire question paper.

Overall, the candidate performed at a level D. This candidate is representative of many lower level candidates, in that they performed better than anticipated in the new section 2 part of the exam paper. The majority of candidates performed better in section 2 than other parts of the question paper.

Overall, the candidate's knowledge base was limited, but was clearly stronger on the biological side of environmental science. Earth science focused questions were noticeably more demanding, for example, question 7.

Straightforward questions

Examples:

Q2 (a) (b) (c) and (d) (i) The candidate was awarded full marks for all of these questions. The candidate was in a minority that correctly answered part (a).

Q8 (a) The candidate did not attain this mark, but this is a good illustration of why candidates need to be encouraged to learn the definitions set out in the mandatory content.

Q8(b) (i) The candidate was awarded 2 marks out of 3.
(ii) The candidate was awarded 1 mark.
(iii) The candidate was awarded 1 mark.

This was quite a challenging question because it was an unusual approach to the topic area. Overall, the candidate attained 4 marks out of a possible 7. If the candidate had been

able to improve the earth science part of their knowledge to this level of understanding, they would probably have raised their mark to a C. For lower level candidates it is particularly important that they have an adequate knowledge base for all three key areas of the course.

Graph/Calculation questions

Examples:

- Q3 (a) The candidate was awarded all 3 marks. Unlike the candidate 1 example, the candidate chose a straightforward scale for the y-axis that enabled the marker to identify clearly the accuracy of the top of the bars.
- Q4 (d) A two step calculation. The candidate was awarded both marks because they attained the correct answer. However, they did not show any working and had they made a calculating error, but used the correct method, they would not have been able to gain any marks. It is worth encouraging candidates to show their working, especially in the two-step calculation questions.

Explain/Discuss/Evaluate/Justify ...questions

Examples:

- Q5 (d) The candidate was awarded 0 marks, but they did manage to attain more than half marks overall in Q5. The candidate has misunderstood the question and has answered as if the question was asking if hybrid cars are sustainable options for society rather than whether the trend towards the growth of hybrid car ownership is sustainable.
- Lower level candidates tend to struggle with some command words and 'evaluate' is one of the main ones that can cause issues.
- Q10 (c) (ii) The candidate was awarded 1 mark. The answer was not what we were expecting but given the sources available to the candidate, it was felt that this response was reasonable. Many candidates did not use the sources provided to answer this question and missed the fact that woodland Y was a monoculture woodland area.
- Q10 (d) (iii) The candidate was awarded 1 mark out of 2. Hydro power was a potential source of energy, but the candidate was unable to use the varied sources provided to come up with a reason why this might be suitable.

Q10 (e) The candidate was awarded 1 mark out of 4 for the only justification they could provide, namely that the smoke produced by the biomass plant may create air pollution.

Lower level candidates can find justification questions challenging, and so candidates should be encouraged to practice these types of questions regularly. The last question in section 2 will always be a 'justification for your choice' type of question. As it is normally worth around 4 marks, it is especially important that candidates become familiar and confident at answering these.