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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

GEOGRAPHY **9696/23**

Paper 2 Core Human Geography **October/November 2025**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

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Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning	Use
	Correct point	Point-marked questions only: Section A, Section B part (a)
	Incorrect	Point-marked questions only: Section A, Section B part (a)
L4	Level 4	Levels-marked questions only: Section B part (c)
L3	Level 3	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
L2	Level 2	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
L1	Level 1	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
0	Level 0 – No creditable response	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
Highlighter	Creditworthy part of an extended response	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
EVAL	Evaluative point	Levels-marked questions only: Section B part (c)
^	Omission or further development/ detail needed to gain credit	All questions
	Unclear or validity is doubted	All questions
DEV	Developed point	All questions

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Annotation	Meaning	Use
EG	Appropriate example or case study given	All questions
IRRL	Irrelevant	All questions
NAQ	Material that does not answer the question	All questions
	Highlighting a significant part of an extended response – to be used with another annotation e.g IRRL or EVAL	Levels-marked questions only: Section B parts (b) and (c)
SEEN	1. Diagram or essay plan has been seen but no specific credit given 2. Additional page has been checked	1. Any diagrams or essay plans 2. All blank pages in the provided generic answer booklet and/or extension answer booklet(s).
R	Rubric error	Optional questions only (place at start of question not being credited): Section B (Candidates answer one question)

Examiners must consider the following guidance when marking the essay questions:

Candidates are free to develop their own approach to the question and responses will vary depending on the approach chosen. Whichever approach is chosen, essays which address the question and support their argument with relevant examples will be credited. There may be detailed consideration of a case study/one or more examples, or a broadly conceived response, drawing on several examples to illustrate the factors involved.

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Section A

Answer **all** questions in this section. All questions are worth 10 marks.

Population

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	**Fig. 1.1 shows the relationship between life expectancy and healthcare expenditure per capita, by country, in 2019.** **Describe the relationship shown in Fig. 1.1.** Description of the relationship could include: • A positive relationship • Overall strong relationship • With some exceptions/anomalies e.g. $2500/65, majority at $2500 have a life expectancy >75. • Wider spread in healthcare expenditure 70 years and below and tighter spread in healthcare expenditure 70 years and above • Example of positive relationship • Example of either a range of healthcare expenditure for similar life expectancy or a range in life expectancy for a similar healthcare expenditure • Other valid approaches Some tolerance required if quoting values due to semi log. scale – candidates might refer to groups. **1 mark** for each descriptive point. **Reserve 1 mark** for use of data e.g. identification of anomalies below 55 years.	**4**
1(b)	**Suggest how life expectancy may influence birth rates in a country.** Points could include: • Low life expectancy is linked to high infant mortality rates. When life expectancy is low, children are less likely to survive to adulthood, so birth rates are higher, as children are needed to support the family (economically and in old age) • As life expectancy improves, birth rate tends to fall (after a period of adjustment) as people recognise children are more likely to survive • In a country with an ageing population with high life expectancy, the government may try to increase birth rates through pro-natalist policies **1 mark** for a simple point. **2 marks** for a developed point (with detail or an example).	**2**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	**Explain how <u>two</u> environmental factors contribute to low life expectancy in a country.** Environmental factors could include: • Disease related to environmental conditions e.g. malaria • Air pollution – respiratory disease • Water pollution / unreliable water supply increases susceptibility to waterborne disease • Extreme weather events/climate change e.g. drought, leading to famine • Land degradation leading to food shortages. • Other environmental factors For each factor: **1 mark** for a simple explanation, **2 marks** for a developed explanation (with detail or an example).	**4**

Migration

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	**Fig. 2.1 shows changes in natural increase and net migration for HICs, 1950–2050 (estimated from 2020).** **Compare the changes in natural increase and net migration shown in Fig. 2.1.** Comparisons could include: • Overall, natural increase declines but net migration increases • Crossover point during the decade 2000–2019 • Before 2000, natural increase steadily/rapidly declines, but net migration shows a steady then more rapid increase • After 2000, both decline but net migration is expected to remain steady/slightly increase in 2030s, whereas natural increase continues to decline rapidly (e.g. by 15 million from 2030s to 2040s) • Migration change is always positive whereas NI change is predicted to be negative from ~2027 **1 mark** for simple comparative statement, **2 marks** if supported with accurate data. **Max. 1 mark** if no comparison.	**4**
2(b)	**Explain <u>one</u> pull factor for international migration to HICs.** Pull factors could include: • Greater economic stability • More employment opportunities • Higher pay • Able to send remittances home • More social stability • Higher standard of / better access to healthcare/education	**2**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	• Higher quality housing • Increased political/religious freedoms / improved human rights (asylum) • Other **1 mark** for simple explanation. **2 marks** for developed explanation.	
2(c)	**Explain the economic disadvantages of international out-migration for source areas.** Economic disadvantages could include: • Loss of labour • Brain drain/shortage of skilled workers • Loss of investment into educating/skilling workers who leave • Falling GDP • Inefficient primary industries • Dependency on remittances • Lower taxation revenue / tax burden on remaining population • Lack of innovation/investment into affected areas • Other **1 mark** for a simple explanation, **2 marks** for a developed explanation (with detail or an example).	**4**

Settlement dynamics

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	**Fig. 3.1 shows the percentage of urban population living in poor housing conditions, by country, in 2022.** **Describe the pattern shown in Fig. 3.1.** Description of the pattern could include: • Majority of countries have 0.0–24.9% urban population living in poor housing conditions • Only Africa has countries with 75.0–100.0% • Africa also has the greatest number of countries with 25.0–49.9% and 50.0–74.9% • In Africa, the countries with 75.0–100% are between the Tropics; only north/south of the continent have lower percentages • Most of Europe and North America are in 0.0–24.9% category • Asia mostly 25.0–49.9% • Other • **1 mark** for each descriptive point.	**4**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	**Suggest <u>two</u> problems for residents in shanty towns (squatter settlements).** Problems could include: • Lack of clean water causing diseases (such as dysentery, typhoid and cholera) • Overcrowded houses / high density housing / spread of disease / lack of privacy • Poor quality housing (building materials) • No security of tenure (illegal housing) • Vulnerable to natural hazards (e.g. landslides on steep slopes) • Lack of formal services such as rubbish collection, schools or hospitals • Lack of formal infrastructure (electricity, water, sanitation) • High crime rates/gangs/lack of security • Low pay/lack of employment • Poor access for vehicles • Other **1 mark** for each problem.	**2**
3(c)	**Explain <u>two</u> challenges for governments of managing shanty towns (squatter settlements).** Challenges could include: • Policing of gang-controlled areas • Lack of trust from residents – methods of governance (top-down vs bottom up) • Inaccessibility e.g. steep slopes mean it is physically challenging (and expensive) to make improvements • Density of housing and narrow streets make emergency service access difficult • Provision of formal services such as rubbish collection, schools or hospitals • Provision of formal infrastructure such as electricity, water, sanitation • Improvements are costly • Continuous growth • Other For each challenge: **1 mark** for a simple explanation, **2 marks** for a developed explanation (with detail or an example).	**4**

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Section B

Answer **one** question from this section. All questions are worth 30 marks.

Population

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	**Describe how the structure of the population influences the dependency ratio for a country.** The dependency ratio is the sum of the young population (under age 15) and elderly population (age 65 and over) relative to the working-age population (ages 15 to 64) / shown as the number of dependents per 100 working-age population. Youthful populations have a high proportion of the population under 15 years old, who are child/young dependents. Ageing populations have a high proportion of people aged 65+, who are aged dependents. Both these groups are non-productive and are therefore considered a burden on the working population. However, a youthful population may have very few elderly dependents, in which case the dependency ratio may not be so high. Over time this will change as population growth happens and life expectancy improves, so the ratio will be lower – where there are a balance of youth and elderly to the middle age groups, the dependency ratio may be quite low. There may be references to the demographic transition model (DTM). Candidates may also refer to the percentage of females or males. Candidates may use diagrams to support their answer. **1 mark** for a simple description, **2 marks** for a developed description (such as detail or an example) up to the maximum.	**7**
4(b)	**With the aid of examples, explain the role of constraints in relation to sustaining population.** Constraints are the factors that may cause a population to level off or decline (Malthusian ideas). These include: • War and conflict, as increasing populations require more land and resources • Ability of the natural environment to supply sufficient food • The role of disease as overcrowding leads to illness and death • Poverty – population lacks ability to obtain resources and constrains growth • Economic restrictions on trade – quotas, tariffs limiting ability to export • Social changes – women delaying children, lower BR • Political instability and corruption • Climatic hazards, pests • Lack of labour	**8**

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	The constraint will have an impact on either population or resources, but population or resources may be a constraining factor on the other. Sustaining a population refers to the ability to provide sufficient resources for the population and having sufficient people to exploit the resources, whilst maintaining sufficient resources for the future. **Max. 4 marks** if no valid examples. Award marks based on the quality of explanation and breadth of the response using the marking levels below. **Level 3 (6–8)** Response clearly explains the role of constraints in relation to sustaining population. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. **Level 2 (3–5)** Response explains the role of constraints in relation to sustaining population. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. Examples may lack detail or development. **Level 1 (1–2)** Response is largely descriptive of constraints in relation to sustaining population. Knowledge is basic and understanding may be inaccurate. Examples are in name only or lacking entirely. **Level 0 (0)** No creditable response.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	**'Underpopulation is easier to manage for a government than overpopulation.'** **With the aid of examples, how far do you agree with this statement?** Candidates should demonstrate understanding of both overpopulation and underpopulation and how easy either is to manage by a government. Underpopulation is the theoretical situation where there are too few people in an area to use all the resources efficiently at the current level of technology. Overpopulation is where the available resources are unable to sustain the population living there, either because of population growth or resource exhaustion. Management strategies might include: For underpopulation: • Pro-natal policies to promote larger family size e.g. tax incentives, maternity rights extended • Encourage in-migration of workers • Investment in production of resources • Mechanisation/advanced methods/innovation to make better use of resources with fewer people • Import resources to make up for the shortfall • Other For overpopulation: • Reduction of birth rate e.g. one child policy, incentivise smaller families, increase availability/acceptance of contraception • Improve life chances of young and older people • Health improvements • Taxation policies • Economic development • Female empowerment • Investment in resource extraction, growth, production • Encourage less resource use • Discourage in-migration • Other Factors which make it easier or more difficult to manage: • Technology available • Finance • Resources • Area • Characteristics of the population • Nature of the government	**15**

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Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	Award marks based on the quality of the response using the marking levels below. **Level 4 (12–15)** Response thoroughly assesses the extent to which underpopulation is easier to manage for a government than overpopulation. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. **Level 3 (8–11)** Response assesses the extent to which underpopulation is easier to manage for a government than overpopulation but may be unbalanced. Examples may lack detail or development. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. **Level 2 (4–7)** Response shows general knowledge and understanding of the extent to which underpopulation is easier to manage for a government than overpopulation. Response is mainly descriptive or explanatory with limited use of examples and understanding of the topic may be partial or inaccurate. Some concluding remarks. General responses without the use of example(s) will not get above the middle of Level 2 (6 marks). **Level 1 (1–3)** Response may broadly discuss underpopulation and/or overpopulation but does not address the question and does not come to a convincing conclusion. Response is descriptive, knowledge is basic and understanding is poor. **Level 0 (0)** No creditable response.	

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Migration/Settlement dynamics

Question	Answer	Marks
5(a)(i)	**Define the term 'refugee'.** A refugee is a person who has been forced (1) to leave their country/crossed an international boundary (1) to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster/in fear for life (1).	**3**
5(a)(ii)	**Explain <u>two</u> barriers to refugee flows.** Barriers to refugee flows could include: • Physical barriers such as mountain ranges, deserts, seas or oceans, hard borders • Dangers on the journey (physical hazards; violence; exploitation) • Legal barriers such as immigration laws in the destination/receiving countries • Length of journey • Other For each barrier: **1 mark** for a simple point, **2 marks** for a developed point (such as detail or an example).	**4**
5(b)	**With the aid of examples, explain the push factors which cause rural to urban migration in LICs/MICs.** Candidates may consider economic, social, environmental or political push factors from rural areas. These could include: • Underemployment and low pay • Unemployment due to mechanisation or other agricultural changes such as loss of land to corporate farming • Crop failure • Poor living conditions – lack of clean water, electricity, etc. • Poor healthcare and education services • Few facilities • Natural disasters • Civil war/political insecurity • Other Ideas could be developed to explain a negative multiplier effect as rural populations decline, services lack threshold populations and areas receive less investment/government interest. **Max. 4 marks** if no valid examples or a generic response without reference to the LICs/MICs context.	**8**

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Question	Answer	Marks
5(b)	Award marks based on the quality of explanation and breadth of the response using the marking levels below. **Level 3 (6–8)** Response clearly explains the push factors which cause rural to urban migration in LICs/MICs. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. **Level 2 (3–5)** Response explains the push factors which cause rural to urban migration in LICs/MICs. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. Examples may lack detail or development. **Level 1 (1–2)** Response is largely descriptive of push factors in rural to urban migration. Knowledge is basic and understanding may be inaccurate. Examples are in name only or lacking entirely. **Level 0 (0)** No creditable response.	
5(c)	**With the aid of examples, assess the extent to which rural to urban migration in LICs/MICs causes problems in <u>urban</u> areas.** Problems in the urban areas could include: • Housing including growth of shanty towns • Pressure on services such as education and healthcare provision • Pressure on public infrastructure such as transport, water, electricity and sanitation • Unemployment/underemployment / growth of informal sector • Tensions between older and newer residents / between different immigrant groups • Increases the price of commodities, housing and transport • Other However, some of these could be addressed e.g. self-help programmes to improve housing, investments in services. Benefits to the urban areas (counterarguments) could include: • Supply of (low paid) labour • New skills • Cultural diversity • Over time migrants can aid longer term development as they are healthier/better educated and can contribute to economy as well as improving their own life chances • Other Candidates may evaluate by considering changes over time, between places, number of migrants, governance of the area migrants move to.	**15**

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Question	Answer	Marks
5(c)	Award marks based on the quality of the response using the marking levels below. **Level 4 (12–15)** Response thoroughly assesses the extent to which rural to urban migration in LICs/MICs causes problems in urban areas. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. **Level 3 (8–11)** Response assesses the extent to which rural to urban migration in LICs/MICs causes problems in urban areas but may be unbalanced. Examples may lack detail or development. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. **Level 2 (4–7)** Response shows general knowledge and understanding of the extent to which rural to urban migration in LICs/MICs causes problems in urban areas. Response is mainly descriptive or explanatory with limited use of examples and understanding of the topic may be partial or inaccurate. Some concluding remarks. General responses without the use of example(s) will not get above the middle of Level 2 (6 marks). **Level 1 (1–3)** Response may broadly discuss rural to urban migration or problems in urban areas but does not address the question and does not come to a convincing conclusion. Response is descriptive, knowledge is basic and understanding is poor. **Level 0 (0)** No creditable response.	

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Settlement dynamics

Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)	**Describe how competition for space (spatial competition) leads to functional zonation in urban areas.** Description could include: • Different land users will compete with one another for land • Motivated by profit maximisation • The highest bidder gets to use the land with the most competition (usually at the centre) • The central area benefits from accessibility to/from other areas, so is point of maximum land value PVLI, retail and other services, generally of high order or specialist services • Low supply with high demand increases land value • Concentric pattern of land uses develops • Highest values at the centre and declining outwards • Bid rent theory • Similar land uses congregate together • Other points Candidates may use diagrams to support their answer. **1 mark** for a simple description, **2 marks** for a developed description (such as detail or an example) up to the maximum.	**7**
6(b)	**With the aid of examples, explain the role of planning in the location of activities in urban areas.** Candidates should demonstrate knowledge of the role of planning and links to the location of activities in urban areas. The role of government may vary from planned economies to more laissez-faire policies. The role of planning is to control where activities in general are located. It plays a critical role in identifying what development is needed and where, what areas need to be protected or enhanced and in assessing whether proposed developments are suitable. Ideas could include: • Restrictive planning such as greenbelts, which can force developments to locate within an urban area • Slum clearance schemes • Use of brownfield sites • Incentives to utilise spaces in specific ways e.g. only giving planning permission for affordable homes rather than private • Redeveloping sites with a function in mind e.g. pedestrianisation to encourage hospitality and retailing • Suburban industrial estates – planned to encourage specific activities to boost employment and investment • Planning of transport routes • Provision of other infrastructure • Segregating types of activities (residential, industrial)	**8**

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(b)	• Limits and restrictions on the nature of buildings, the materials used, spacing, open spaces and ensure that sustainability is met **Max. 4 marks** if no valid examples. Award marks based on the quality of explanation and breadth of the response using the marking levels below. **Level 3 (6–8)** Response clearly explains the role of planning in the location of activities in urban areas. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. **Level 2 (3–5)** Response explains the role of planning in the location of activities in urban areas. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. Examples may lack detail or development. **Level 1 (1–2)** Response is largely descriptive of either planning or the location of activities in urban areas. Knowledge is basic and understanding may be inaccurate. Examples are in name only or lacking entirely. **Level 0 (0)** No creditable response.	
6(c)	**'A globalised financial sector is the most important factor in defining a world city.'** **With the aid of examples, how far do you agree with this statement?** A world city can be defined using a range of criteria and characteristics such as: Financial/economic: • Important hubs for the global economy • Significant in the worldwide flow of capital, stock exchange • Concentration of advanced producer services (accountancy, advertising, banking/finance, law) • Number of TNC headquarters and their size and economic performance • Connectivity – alpha cities are primary nodes in the global economic network Other: • Political influence e.g. UN offices, hosting climate conferences • Cultural/historical importance – universities, museums, landmark buildings • Population size • Physical transport infrastructure and internet communications	**15**

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(c)	• A composite indicator including scores on business activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience and political engagement • Innovation and creativity • Quality of life measures • Diversity of cultures/groups Award marks based on the quality of the response using the marking levels below. **Level 4 (12–15)** Response thoroughly assesses the extent to which a globalised financial sector is the most important factor in defining a world city. Examples used are appropriate and integrated effectively into the response. Response is well founded in detailed knowledge and strong conceptual understanding of the topic. **Level 3 (8–11)** Response assesses the extent to which a globalised financial sector is the most important factor in defining a world city but may be unbalanced. Examples may lack detail or development. Response develops on a largely secure base of knowledge and understanding. **Level 2 (4–7)** Response shows general knowledge and understanding of the extent to which a globalised financial sector is the most important factor in defining a world city. Response is mainly descriptive or explanatory with limited use of examples and understanding of the topic may be partial or inaccurate. Some concluding remarks. General responses without the use of example(s) will not get above the middle of Level 2 (6 marks). **Level 1 (1–3)** Response may broadly discuss world cities but does not address the question and does not come to a convincing conclusion. Response is descriptive, knowledge is basic and understanding is poor. **Level 0 (0)** No creditable response.	

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