**Examination feedback report**

GGH1501

May 2017 Examination

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**General comments**

The exam paper for May 2017 followed the same basic structure than for Semester 2 of 2016, namely:

Section A: weight 60%, 44 MCQs

Section B: weight 40%, to do any four questions of 10 marks, consisting of two sub-questions - one for 6 marks and one for 4 marks (from different learning units).

Initial exam guidance was supplied in Tutorial letter 104 and consisted of a list of topic per leaning unit that need to be covered for the examination. Although the guidance reduced the amount of work to study, it was not a quick fix that could be applied close before the exam. Follow-up guidance was supplied a few days before the examination, consisting of a list of all the chapters in the text book, with an indication whether it should be studied, only noted or ignored. Starting 5 days before the examination, this was supplemented with an exam tip per day that was posted as an announcement on myUnisa, accompanied with a sms notification.

Getting to the examination itself, the impression after the marking has been completed is that the time allocated for the examination was not problematic, and that students seemed to be able to complete. Overall the performance of students seems to be much better in Section A than in Section B. Some answers provided by students in Section B show that they were really not well prepared, and answered some questions very poorly, even those questions that might have been expected, based on the examination guidance.

Possible reasons for the relative poor performance in Section B could be associated with one or more of the following reasons:

1. Not having or using the textbook
2. Not using the tutorial letters (from TL102 only available online)
3. Not online at all, or else hardly ever
4  Not working very hard and not consistently either during the semester
5  Trying to crunch through all the work short before the examination

To conclude, we would like to congratulate the students who passed (constituting a significant percentage of the class) and especially the 91 students who obtained distinctions (about 5% of the class). Performance in this module is currently showing an upward trend, about which we are very happy. If you did not pass or got a supplementary, we trust you will make it during the next round, and that the experience that you gained during the past semester will help you to prepare better and in a different way for the next round. The feedback in this report might also be of assistance.

Feedback on Section A (44 multiple choice questions)
The average score for Section A was acceptable, with about 62% of the students that passed this section. This is regarded at satisfactory and better than the performance during the past, about which we are very happy. Two questions were removed from the test since the statistical analysis of results revealed that the alternative options confused the students and that the questions were therefore not understood well (Question 1 and 30). All students were credited with the marks for these two questions.

Feedback on Section B
Feedback of a general nature on how students performed has already been supplied in the first section of this report. This section is therefore devoted to feedback per question.

Question 1.1
Compare the scales that have been used for the maps in respectively Figure 2 (p. 3), Figure 5 (p. 9) and Figure 6 (p. 11) in this examination paper by:
- firstly converting the line scales for each of these maps to word scales
- secondly explaining why different scales were used for each of these maps

Feedback: Although it was not difficult to read off the scales from the maps, some students could not do it. Students incorrectly assumed that the total length of the line scales were 1cm, whereas they were asked to assume the length between tick marks to be 1cm. When explaining the use of different scales, they seem not to understand the difference between small and large scale maps.
Question 1.2
List and very briefly explain any two important differences that exist between sustainable agriculture and general commercial agriculture. (4)

*Feedback:* Although this should have been an easy question, some students scored badly due to the mistake to swap the two concepts. Another mistake that some students made was to confuse sustainable with subsistence agriculture – perhaps because they just did not read the question properly or were not prepared well enough.

Question 2.1
Provide a short explanation on the use of area analysis as analytic method by modern day geographers in their research about contemporary issues in the world. (6)

*Feedback:* Surprisingly, this question was not answered very well by the majority of students, who provided an answer in terms of spatial analysis, and not area analysis. This is despite an exam tip a few days before the examination, reminding students that spatial analysis is not the only type of geographical analysis. This also shows that many students only rely on studying fragments of the course material, as for instance the feedback on the assignments, rather than to try to work through as much of the course material as possible.

Question 2.2
Certain physical environments are sparsely populated. Discuss any ONE of these environments by providing a brief explanation of the relationship between the environment and population for this specific environment that you have chosen. (4)

*Feedback:* Also dealt with in Assignment 02, students simply had to take one of polar areas, deserts, etc. and discuss relationships between population and harsh environmental factors. Some students still blunder here since they did not know what a “physical environment” means, and for example discussed urban versus rural areas here. Not knowing what a physical environment refers to, requires urgent attention by such students, and is an aspect that is covered quite extensively in the module.

Question 3.1
Debate the benefits and drawbacks of implementing controls for international labour migration. (6)
Feedback: Students obtained average scores for their answers to this question, mostly because they responded in terms of benefits and drawbacks in general, and did not focus on what was asked, namely the benefits and drawbacks of controls over this type of migration. May be this is because such students did not read the question properly, or did not apply their minds to what was actually required or else they could not elaborate on the effects of controls because they were not prepared very well, and based their answer rather on what they knew than on what was asked.

Question 3.2
Briefly explain how the world political map has been or might still be changed by either the role of ethnicity or nationalism. (4)

Feedback: A relatively easy question, but which students struggled to answer despite a very direct tip about it a few days before the examination. The understanding that students have of ethnicity/nationalism and associated impacts in terms of the world political map is very poor. Some do not even seem to understand what is meant when referring to the world political map, which is worrying.

Question 4.1
Choose any language and then briefly explain the process how this language diffused from its area of origin to other areas in the world. Also very briefly comment on the current distribution of your chosen language in the world. (6)

Feedback: Average scores were obtained with the answers provide for this question. Students who relied only on general knowledge typically scored 2 to 3 out of 6. Students who incorporated the theory on diffusion as well as the theory in the chapters on language, scored better.

Question 4.2
Name and briefly describe any one of the three major biomes that can be found in South Africa with specific reference to the role of climate in the characteristics of the biome that you have chosen. (4)

Feedback: This question was answered in an average way, despite a very direct tip about it close to the exam – students know their own country very badly, combined with the fact that they might not have given the world map with biomes the attention in their preparation that they should have.
Question 5.1
Name and very briefly describe any three (3) of the five major factors that determine soil properties. (6)

Feedback: This was an expected question, coming from the examination in November 2016. Some quite good answers were supplied, but also some quite bad ones. It is remarkable that some students could do well and score almost 6/6, while others scored badly, barely managing to score 1/6 or 2/6.

Question 5.2
Explain why each location on Earth is unique and how locations are interrelated. (4)

Feedback: Similar to November 2016, this question was not answered very well. Students seem to struggle to explain what makes places unique and how places are interrelated. This is worrying, since it is an important concept to grasp and fundamental in terms of Geography.

Question 6.1
Explain how development varies amongst regions in the world with reference to your choice of one less developed country (LDC) and one more developed country (MDC) and by using the information on the global spatial patterns of:
- Gross National Income (GNI) per capita ppp (Figure 6)
- Human Development Index (HDI) (Figure 8)
- Literacy Level (LL) (Figure 9) (6)

Feedback: This question was answered reasonably well by most students, and was similar to a question in Assignment 02. Despite this similarity, many students could not identify two countries as examples, and answered the question in a general way. If that was the case, they also did not use the maps in the examination paper to look up values for the indexes. Up to half of the marks for this question could therefore be written off in this way, by not identifying two countries and not looking up their data in the maps. It is worrying that students are losing marks in this way, apparently because they do not know how to distinguish between more and less developed countries and/or how to read off values from thematic maps.
Question 6.2

What makes a Geographical Information System (GIS) unique? Also provide an example of how a GIS is used in a location-based application of your choice. (4)

Feedback: Surprisingly, this question was answered very badly. This might be related to the fact that it comes from Learning Unit 7, which is the last unit. Students need to be reminded that all learning units are examined, and that there is also theory in Learning Unit 7 which is examined and should not be ignored.

Concluding remarks

It can be concluded that the exam constituted a valid test of student’s understanding of the materials dealt with in GGH1501 during Semester 1 of 2017. It seemed not to have been an easy paper, but it was also not too difficult, and if students were well prepared and used the available time to their advantage, a good score was indeed possible, as indicated by the 91 distinctions. The pass rate for GGH1501 is showing an increasing trend, about which we are very happy.

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