



# PSAC 2018

Grade 6

Modular Assessment  
History & Geography

Subject code: **P142/2**

Examiners' Report

# **HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY**

Subject Code No.P142/2

## **Key Messages**

- Candidates must be encouraged to
  - read items and questions carefully, paying attention to key words to understand the full meaning of questions;
  - identify and make the distinction between physical factors and human factors when studying agricultural land use/farming;
  - develop observation skills in the geographical environment itself and through picture study;
  - practise interpretation skills by working with maps, diagrams and pictures/photographs;
  - develop the ability to use a table to classify and make comparisons;
  - link concepts such as 'pollution, waste and the environment' from topic 4 to other topics/parts of Unit 1;
  - discuss their answers to open-ended questions orally with their peers and practise more frequently writing them under guidance.

## General Comments

Candidates who sat for the Grade 6 modular assessment in August 2018 took the Grade 5 modular assessment in October 2017. The question paper for Grade 6 school candidates carries a total of 50 marks. It is of a duration of 1 hour. In 2018, the paper contained 7 questions. The modular assessment at Grade 6 was based on the History and Geography topics from the Grade 6 curriculum that had been taught and learnt in 2018. The marks of the candidates on the modular assessments at Grades 5 and 6 are added to produce the final grade result for the PSAC Assessment 2018.

76.54% of candidates achieved at least a grade 5 in History & Geography in 2018. The average mark reached by candidates was 28. On the whole, this seems to be encouraging and indicates that candidates were well prepared for the modular assessment. Still, the performance varied much among those candidates who were found to be able to tackle only specific question formats with supply type/closed answer type and those candidates who were able to provide written answers to open-ended questions.

Some candidates performed well on the items/questions assessing knowledge mainly in the form of MCQs, Fill-in-the-Blanks, completing a table of classification and on Very Short Answer Questions. However, they were much less successful at thinking and writing with the same level of confidence for those items/questions which assessed understanding of terms and concepts and the application of knowledge.

These candidates faced some difficulties and performed rather unsatisfactorily when they were required to interpret information presented in various formats (e.g. part (a) of Question 5) or to demonstrate acquisition of comparison skills (e.g. part (c) of Question 4).

Candidates should be further encouraged to learn about the similarities and differences in the working and living conditions of 'slaves' and 'indentured labourers'. They should be

encouraged to work with various sources of information in History and to visit museums and other places of historical interest. Such learning activities will definitely enhance the History curriculum and consolidate deeper understanding. Similarly, fieldwork, mapwork and working with data contribute to develop important subject skills such as direct observation in the environment and the ability to handle and make sense of information.

## Specific Comments

### Question 1

It comprised 8 multiple-choice items which assessed knowledge of Geography and History. This question was fairly well attempted by the candidates.

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|---------------|---|
| <b>Item 1</b> | It was answered well by candidates. It assessed knowledge of land use devoted to tourism, which is known as recreational land use.  |
| <b>Item 2</b> | It assessed the ability of candidates to choose one physical factor influencing agricultural land use, farming. Performance was lower than expected. It was not generally well answered by the average candidate. Out of the four options, option <b>B</b> was the correct answer. 'Relief' was the only physical factor, the other three factors (transport, location and labour) being human factors. |
| <b>Item 3</b> | It was set on the topic 'Slavery'. Most candidates were able to identify the Dutch Governor Van der Stel as the first colonial Governor who imported slaves in Mauritius.   |
| <b>Item 4</b> | Candidates were asked to identify in which season tropical cyclones are formed. Most of them were able to identify 'summer'. It is worthwhile to stress that there are only two seasons in tropical areas, namely summer and winter.  |

- Item 5** This item was set on the topic of 'Natural Hazards'. Candidates had to know the accurate definition of 'torrential rains' by choosing the exact amount of widespread rain that is 100mm, which should occur in less than 12 hours. It was well answered.
- Item 6** It assessed the ability to recall the year of an important historical event, the 'Battle of Grand Port' between the French and the British colonial powers. It highlighted the strategic location of Mauritius in this part of the Indian Ocean. Some candidates confused 1810 with 1910. Others chose 1835, the year of the abolition of slavery.
- Item 7** Candidates found it very easy to identify the name of the flower which is the national symbol of the Republic of Mauritius. Indeed, the 'Trochetia' is an endemic flower which has a great symbolic importance. It instills a sense of pride, uniqueness and belonging to the Republic.
- Item 8** This was generally well answered by candidates. Candidates should make a distinction between the National History Museum which is found at Mahebourg and the Natural History Museum which is found in Port Louis.

## Question 2

This question assessed in two parts the recall of facts and understanding of concepts related to the sugar cane sector. It carried a total of 5 marks. On the whole, candidates answered the recall items (part a) on sugar mills better than the items assessing concepts related to the sugar industry (part b).

**Part (a)** It was based on **Picture 2** which showed a modern sugar mill that produces refined sugar. There were three items. Each item carried one mark.

- (i) Candidates found it relatively easy to name one sugar mill in Mauritius.

- (ii) It was not easy for all of them to name one special sugar produced by sugar mills nowadays. Examples of good answers given by candidates included: muscovado, and demerara.
- (iii) It proved to be easy for candidates to give 'bagasse' as the by-product of sugar cane used to produce electricity. Candidates should be more careful with the correct spelling of the common vocabulary word 'bagasse'.

**Part (b)** It was based on **Table 1** which showed the decrease in the number of sugar mills between 1858 and 2017. The two items proved to be quite difficult for most candidates.

- (i) Many candidates were not able to give the correct answer 'centralisation' probably because they either did not understand the question or they did not know how to write about the concept. The term 'centralisation' refers to the process whereby bigger sugar mills take over the activities of smaller ones. This results automatically in a reduction in the number of sugar mills. Mistakes occurred quite frequently when candidates were writing the word 'centralisation'.
- (ii) It proved to be quite difficult for candidates to give one reason why it was important to reduce the number of sugar mills. The reason is an economic one: to reduce costs of production/because costs of production have increased; to build bigger mills and use better machines to produce more sugar/ or to diversify production. Two-word answers such as big mills/bigger mills were not awarded any mark. The common answer 'to produce more sugar' was also considered a wrong answer.

### Question 3

Candidates were required to classify six household items in **Table 2** into those which were biodegradable and those which were non-biodegradable by putting a tick in the correct box each time. The first one was done for them. It carried 5 marks. Fewer candidates than expected were able to correctly classify the items because they probably had not grasped the meaning of 'biodegradable' and 'non-biodegradable'



slaves were not paid for their work whereas indentured labourers received wages' and 'slaves could not buy land but indentured labourers could buy land'. Other answers such as 'both were living in small huts/in small camps' and 'slaves had to obey their masters' were also awarded marks. Many candidates used the pronoun 'They' in their answers without stating if they were referring to 'slaves' or 'indentured labourers'. This is to be avoided since it can give rise to some confusion when trying to understand the meaning of their answers. Examples of such answers were: They had a food ration, they were punished, they had no clothes, they were free workers etc.

### Question 5

It was based on the topics 'earthquakes and tsunamis', 'tropical cyclone', and 'torrential rain and flash floods' (Unit 3 'Natural Hazards'). It carried a total of 10 marks. Part (a) was based on a short extract from a text on an earthquake which occurred off the coast of Alaska on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018. It carried 3 marks. Part (b) assessed basic geographical skills. The two items were based on **Map 1** which showed the track of a tropical cyclone in February and **Table 4** which contained information about its position and the highest gust recorded on different days. It carried 3 marks. Part (c) contained two items, each carrying 2 marks, set on the sub-topics 'torrential rain' and 'flash floods' respectively. Candidates attempted parts (b) and (c) more successfully than part (a).

### Part question (a)

- (i) Candidates were asked to state how an earthquake is caused after reading the extract about the earthquake. Only the high flyers were able to answer this question. Low achievers faced some difficulties. Some important elements were missing in their answers. For example, they wrote answers such as 'two oceans collide', 'two rocks hit together', and 'two parts of the world hit together'.
- (ii) This was a higher order question. Candidates had to infer first that a powerful earthquake below the ocean floor is followed by a tsunami before they could give a reason why the residents were told to take shelter on higher grounds. It was mostly the high flyers who were able to use the term tsunami in their answers. To obtain two marks, the candidates had to mention the words 'tsunami' or gigantic/giant/powerful waves and describe



the destructive impacts that this may have caused on lower grounds/in coastal areas.

### Part question (b)

**Map 1** showed a cyclone track in the month of February and **Table 4** its position and the highest gusts recorded on different days.

- (i) This was generally well answered. Candidates were able to read and extract the figure for the highest gust: 155 km/h. However, some candidates apparently did not understand the meaning of the word 'gust'.
- (ii) Using the relevant latitude and longitude in **Table 4**, candidates were required to mark with a dot the position of the cyclone on a specific date. Candidates were not always able to show the acquisition of this skill.
- (iii) Candidates were then asked to draw a line to complete the cyclone track in **Map 1**. This could have been done successfully by joining the three dots which showed the position of the cyclone on 05, 06 and 07 February. For item (iii), candidates were not penalised if the dot was not well placed to show the position on 06 February for item (ii) and if they could link the three dots.

### Part question (c)

- (i) Candidates were required to describe two precautions to be taken during torrential rains. In general, it was well attempted. Candidates who gave precautions to be taken before, during and after a cyclone were not awarded marks.
- (ii) Candidates were required to explain why Mauritius experienced flash floods in recent years. It proved to be quite challenging for most candidates to give a good explanation. Flash floods are natural hazards

which can cause a lot of damage to the people and the environment. They occur mainly because of climate change which results in an increase in the risk of sudden heavy rain in summer. Urbanisation and increased infrastructural development have contributed to the floods. Some candidates came up with relevant ideas drawn from their own experience or accounts reported in the media: lack of drains and accumulation of waste which blocked existing drains.

## Question 6

This was a topical question which assessed candidates' knowledge about independence, our National Flag and the Coat of Arms in the context of the celebration of our 50 years of independence. It carried 8 marks.

Part (a) was a Fill-in-the-Blanks exercise. It assessed knowledge of the flag-hoisting ceremony at the Champs de Mars on 12 March 1968. Some candidates, mainly the high achievers, attempted this question well. Other candidates struggled hard to recall the suitable words and to use correct spelling. For example, they wrote 'Union Flag/the flag of English' instead of Union Jack or British Flag; 'Sir John Sereni/ Saw Reni/ Sir Jonsorenie' instead of Sir John Shaw Rennie; The name of the first president of the Republic, Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo, was also not always written correctly.

Marks could not be given to answers such as JSR, SVR or Sir John.

Part (b) (i) It was rather correctly answered. Most candidates were able to give a relevant interpretation for the colour 'yellow' in the National Flag. Those candidates who were more reflective came up with imaginative answers related to 'the golden sunshine', 'the new light of independence', 'sandy beaches'. These were good answers.

Part (b) (ii) This question assessed the ability of candidates to think about the importance of the 'National Flag. Though it seemed that they had understood the importance of 'nationhood', they had difficulties to express their answers clearly.

Part (c) Candidates were required to observe the Coat of Arms in **Picture 3**, more specifically the three palm trees which represent the tropical vegetation of Mauritius and its three dependencies. It did not prove to be as easy as expected.

### **Question 7**

It carried 7 marks and assessed topics from Unit 5, 'Our Heritage'.

#### **Part question (a)**

- (i) It assessed the ability to identify the monument in **Picture 4**.

The expected answer was the 'Slave Route' monument at Le Morne.

It was not generally well answered. Candidates tended to relate the monument to the abolition of slavery. The concept of 'slave route' was not well mastered.

- (ii) It assessed knowledge of the importance of Le Morne Brabant Mountain, a World Heritage site. A variety of answers was given on these two relevant ideas: it symbolises resistance to/freedom from slavery; it was used as a hiding place by maroon/runaway slaves.

#### **Part question (b)**

Candidates were expected to give one explanation why Mauritius and Rodrigues have a multicultural heritage. Two marks were awarded for an explanation about the diverse geographical origins of our ancestors and the cultural/religious traditions and customs that the people brought and maintained. Some candidates who had a tendency to write only about the diverse geographical origins or the existence of many cultures were awarded only one mark.

#### **Part question (c)**

It was fairly well answered. Candidates were expected to give two reasons why it is important to preserve and protect our heritage. A range of valid reasons was given. However, it was noted that they had some difficulty in expressing their ideas in English

properly. In some cases, the concept word 'heritage' was not well understood. Quite a number of candidates could not differentiate between 'story' and 'history'. Some good answers were: 'it reminds us of important events of the past'; 'to promote heritage tourism'; 'for the future generations to be proud of our history'; 'to be aware of the importance of the contribution of people who 'built' the country in the past.