Extending an answer – 'Explain'

Now consider this question:

> Explain one possible economic impact of climate change. **(2 marks)**

This question asks you to 'explain' (give reasons for) the impacts. That means you shouldn't just state what the impact is but must say **why** it occurs. In the following examples, a tick (√) shows where a mark is earned.

> Rising sea level might mean farmland near the coast gets flooded ✓

This is an impact but is only worth 1 mark as it simply says one thing.

However, the following answer is worth 2 marks:

> Rising sea level might mean farmland near the coast gets flooded ✓ so that farmers lose their crops ✓

'So' is one of the most useful words you'll ever learn to help you get higher marks. Other useful connecting words/phrases include 'therefore' and 'which leads to'.

The explanation has been **extended** to make it worth a second mark.

Other examples of extended answers include:

> Sea level change might mean farmland near the coast gets flooded ✓ and farmers would lose crops, e.g. rice ✓

This is an economic impact, extended with an **example**, so it gains a second mark.

> Sea level change means farmers near the coast might lose rice crops ✓ if saltwater flooded the fields as rice is a freshwater plant ✓

This answer has been **explained**, giving a reason why crops are lost.

Lines of reasoning

Sometimes a question will ask you to give a full explanation for 4 marks. In the following example, you have to think of four points that run in a sequence to explain the process of how one thing leads to another.

> Explain how volcanoes may form along a constructive plate margin.
>
> **(4 marks)**

Below is an example of a **line of reasoning** – an explanation of a process, e.g. 'X happens, which leads to y and then to z'.

> As the plates pull apart ✓, a plume of magma rises to the surface to fill the gap ✓. On constructive plate margins, this is often basaltic lava, which flows easily away from the boundary before it solidifies ✓. More lava creates another layer on top of the first layer ✓.

Question

Study **Fig. 1**, a photo showing a house damaged by Cyclone Haiyan in a rural area of the Philippines in 2013.



Fig. 1

Using **Fig. 1** and your own knowledge, explain two reasons why tropical cyclones have such a big impact in developing countries like the Philippines.

(4 marks)

1 Plan your answer

Before attempting to answer the question, remember to **BUG** it. That means:

- ✓ **Box** the command word.
- ✓ **Underline** the following:
  - the theme
  - the focus
  - any evidence required
  - the number of examples needed.
- ✓ **Glance** back over the question to make sure you include everything in your answer.



Use the BUG example on page 17 to plan your own answer.

On your marks

Evidence: Support your answer with information from the photo **and** from your own knowledge. You must do both to get 4 marks.

Command word: Give reasons why something happens.

Using **Fig. 1** and your own knowledge, explain two reasons why tropical cyclones have such a big impact on developing countries like the Philippines. **(4 marks)**

Theme: This question is linked to the theme of tropical storms, assessed in Paper 1, Section A of your exam. The question is compulsory.

Focus: You must consider why the hazard has such an impact, not just describe what you see in the photo.

Focus and number of examples: The question asks for two specific reasons about developing countries, so you must offer two **and** expand them with more detail.

PEEL your answer

Use PEEL notes to structure your answer. This will help you to communicate your ideas to the examiner in the clearest way. PEEL has four stages.

- **P**oint – make two points for this question. Use sentences, not bullet points.
- **E**xplain – give reasons for each point. Use sentence starters such as: 'This is because ...', 'One reason is ...'.
- **E**vidence – include facts and other details from named examples or from the photo to support each point.
- **L**ink – link the two points to each other, using PEE sentence starters such as: 'A second way is …' or 'Secondly ...'. You'll learn more about how to do this on 6- and 8-mark questions (see pages 24, 32, 40 and 48).

Tip

For all questions using 'Explain' as a command word, you will be marked on the number of points you make. For 4 marks, that means two developed points.

The sample answers are marked below. The text has been highlighted as follows to show how well each answer has structured points:

- points in red
- explanations in orange
- evidence in blue.

A tick (√) is shown for each mark the candidate earns.

Question recap

Using **Fig. 1** and your own knowledge, explain two reasons why tropical cyclones have such a big impact in developing countries like the Philippines.

Marked sample answer 1

1. Tropical cyclones have such a big impact in countries like this because houses would like the one in the photo would have collapsed ✓ because of the high winds in a tropical cyclone ✓ .

2. Tropical cyclones affect the poor most of all as they have no resilience ✓ because they have no savings to fall back on if they lose their house ✓ .

Evidence – collapsed wooden building in the photo

Explanation – suggests that high winds destroyed it

Point – the poor suffer greatest impact because of lack of resilience

Explanation – suggests that the poor have no savings

Examiner feedback

The candidate uses the photo to identify features that help to answer the question in the first point and their own knowledge about the impacts of tropical cyclones on poorer people in the second point. Each point is then extended, so that the answer earns all 4 marks.

Marked sample answer 2

1. Wooden shacks like the one in the photo would not be strong enough to stand up to strong hurricane winds.

2. People in poor countries often live in houses like this on land that isn't theirs.

Evidence – specific building materials from the photo

Explanation – gives a reason why houses are not strong

Examiner feedback

This candidate refers to the photo to identify features about building materials and then how these cannot resist strong hurricane winds. However, although in the second point the candidate gives reasons why poor people are more vulnerable, it doesn't answer this question. The answer therefore earns just 2 marks.

Level 3 means writing to a higher standard.

- Tougher command words are used. 'Describe', 'Explain' and 'Suggest' tend to be used in 4-mark questions. 'Discuss', 'Assess', 'Evaluate' and 'Examine' tend to be used in 6- and 8-mark questions.
- You need to develop an argument in your answer. You could be asked how far you agree with a statement or to what extent do you think something occurs (like the example below).

A **4-mark question** might ask:

'Explain two impacts of a volcanic eruption on climate.'

A **6- or 8-mark question** might ask:

'To what extent can volcanic eruptions cause important changes to the global climate?'

Question

Study **Fig. 1**, a photo showing a rainforest in Borneo, Indonesia that has been cleared to make way for a plantation. The land is now used as a plantation for farming.



Fig. 1

Using **Fig. 1** and your own knowledge, discuss the impacts of rainforest clearance.

(6 marks)

Evidence: Support your answer with information from the photo **and** from your own knowledge. You must do both to get top marks.

Command word: Give an overview of a topic where there are different viewpoints. As well as explaining impacts, you need to decide whether these are positive or negative.

Using Fig. 1 and your own knowledge, discuss the impacts of rainforest clearance. **(6 marks)**

Theme: This question is linked to Topic 4, Sustaining Ecosystems, assessed in Paper 1, Section A of your exam. The question is compulsory.

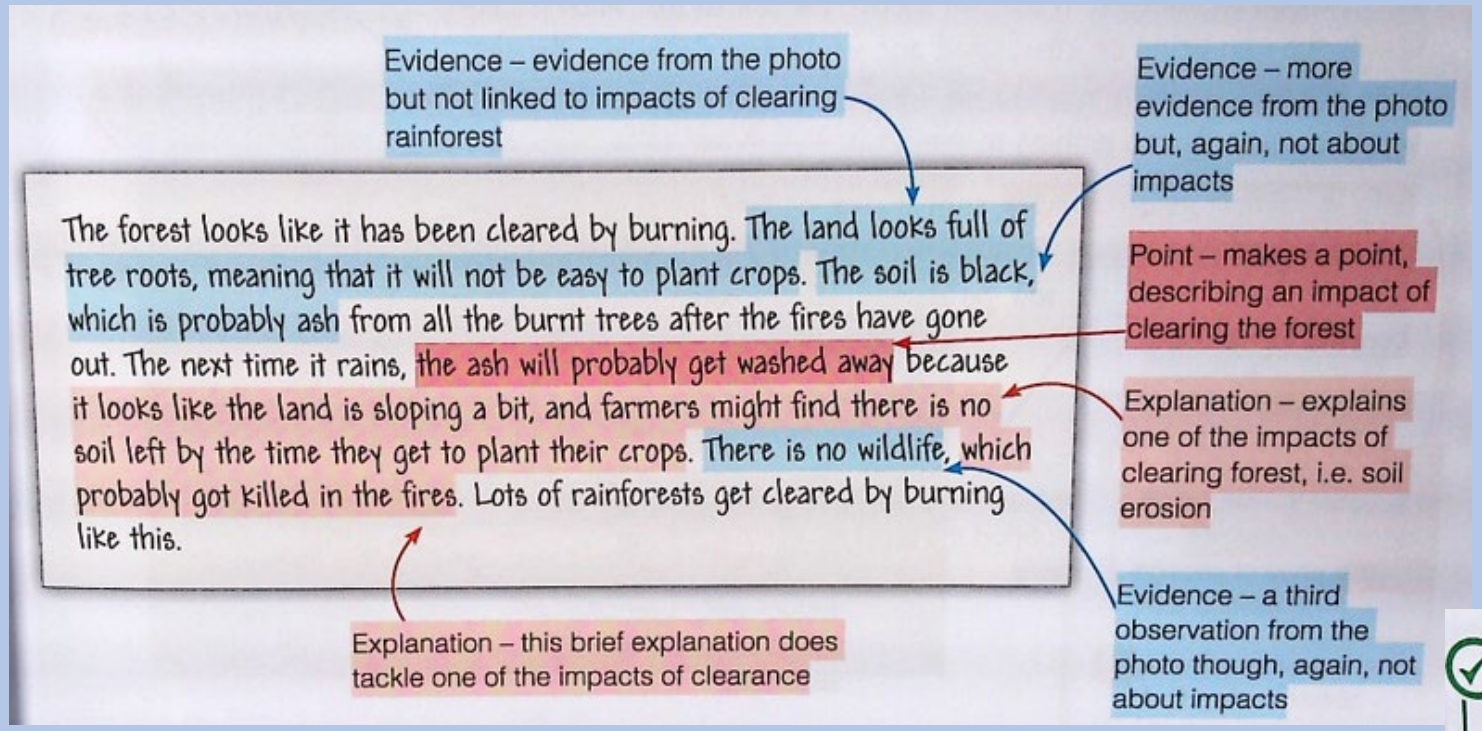
Focus: You must explain reasons why rainforest clearance can have such impacts, based on what you've studied, as well as what's in the photo.

Focus and number of examples: The focus is impacts – i.e. things affected by forest clearance. 6-and 8-mark questions don't state how many impacts – but you probably need to explain and develop two for a 6-mark question and three for a 8-mark question, written in paragraphs.

PEEL your answer

Use PEEL notes to structure your answer. This will help you to communicate your ideas to the examiner in the clearest way. PEEL has four stages.

- **P**oint – give three impacts for this question. Use sentences, not bullet points.
- **E**xplain – give reasons for each point. Use sentence starters such as: 'This is because ...', 'One reason is ...'.
- **E**vidence – include facts and other details from named examples or from the photo to support each point.
- **L**ink – link back to the question, using PEE sentence starters such as: 'This shows how ...' or 'The impacts are therefore greatest when rainforests are ...'. Finish with a one-sentence conclusion.



Examiner feedback

The descriptors for Level 2 just about apply to this answer as follows:

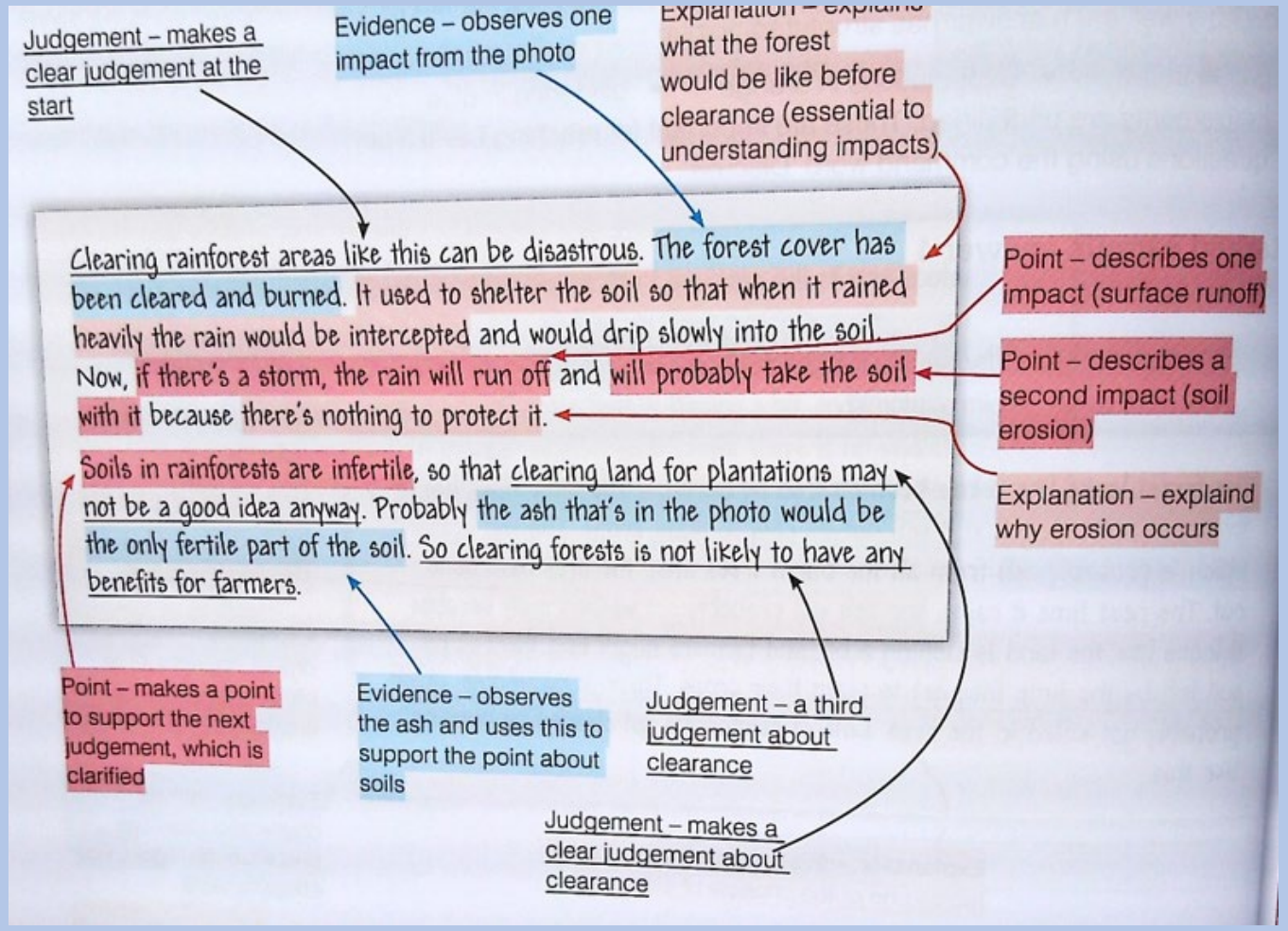
For AO2

- *'Reasonable understanding of the topic'* and *'Information is generally relevant with some detail'* – the candidate understands some impacts of rainforest clearance. This is general rather than detailed, e.g. there is little terminology (e.g. soil erosion).

For AO3

- *'Some analysis of the question title'* and *'Ideas are developed with some evidence'* – the two explanations show that the candidate is using evidence on the photo to suggest consequences of rainforest clearance.
- *'Some lines of reasoning are present'* and *'Argument is presented with some structure'* – the candidate develops an argument.

By partly meeting the descriptors, the answer is lower Level 2 and therefore earns 3 marks.



Examiner feedback

The descriptors for Level 3 apply to this answer as follows:

For AO2

- *'Information is relevant and detailed'* with *'thorough understanding of the topic'* – the candidate understands the impacts about forest, rainfall runoff and soil erosion.

For AO3

- *'Ideas are well developed with clear evidence'* – the candidate uses evidence from the photo to support impacts.
- There are *'Well-developed lines of reasoning'* and *'Clear and logically structured argument'* – the candidate makes three supported, well-evidenced judgements.

By meeting these descriptors fully, the answer is top Level 3 and earns 6 marks.

Before attempting to answer the question, remember to **BUG** it. That means:

- ✓ **Box** the command word.
- ✓ **Underline** the following:
  - the theme
  - the focus
  - any evidence required
  - the number of examples needed.
- ✓ **Glance** back over the question to make sure you include everything in your answer.

Use the BUG example below to plan your own answer.

Remember!

The command word 'Evaluate' assesses AO2 (your knowledge and understanding of the topic) and AO3 (your ability to judge how strong the evidence is).

Command word: Evaluate means 'judge on its strengths and weaknesses'. So you need to decide whether evidence is strong or weak. 'Evaluate' requires a mini-conclusion.

Evidence: Support your answer with evidence from your own knowledge and understanding, such as shrinking glaciers and seasonal weather changes.

Evaluate the evidence that suggests that global climate is currently changing. **(8 marks + 3 marks for SPaG)**

Theme: Climate change is linked to the Topic 2, Changing Climate, assessed in Paper 1, Section A of your exam. The question is compulsory.

Focus: You must explain the **evidence** that global climate is changing, and how reliable or strong it is.

Focus and number of examples: The focus is evidence for a changing global climate. For an 8-mark question, you need three well-explained and well-developed points. Each piece of evidence needs to be written in a paragraph.

How is SPaG assessed?

One 8-mark question on each of Papers 1 and 2 will assess your accuracy of spelling, punctuation, grammar and the use of specialist terminology (known as SPaG). In each of these questions, three marks are allocated as follows:

- High performance – 3 marks
- Intermediate performance – 2 marks
- Threshold performance – 1 mark.

Examiners mark SPaG based on your:

- spelling accuracy, including capitalisation
- punctuation – the use of commas, full stops and semi-colons. If reading an answer aloud leaves you gasping for breath, it needs more punctuation.
- syntax – the quality of your grammar
- paragraphing.

PEEL your answer

Use PEEL notes to structure your answer. This will help you to communicate your ideas to the examiner in the clearest way. PEEL has four stages.

- **P**oint – give at least three pieces of evidence for this question. Use sentences, not bullet points.
- **E**xplain – give reasons for each piece of evidence and how it shows climate is changing. Use sentence starters such as: 'This is because ...', 'One reason is ...'.
- **E**vidence – include details from named examples to support each piece of evidence.
- **L**ink – link back to the question about how reliable the evidence is, using PEE sentence starters. Finish with a one-sentence conclusion about how strong the evidence is that climate is changing.

Tip

'Evaluate' means stating how strong each piece of evidence is

Don't just describe and explain. 'Evaluate' needs you to show if the research and evidence is strong or not.

For example, evidence of global climate change might be shown by shrinking glaciers. Then draw it together in a **mini-conclusion** – it need only be a sentence or two.

Marked sample answer 7

Explanation – gives a reason for warming of the global climate

Point – quantifies the amount of warming

Many sources of evidence show how climate is changing. Temperatures have risen globally since the nineteenth century by about 0.8°C. This is probably due to carbon emissions of greenhouse gases like CO_2 from burning of fossil fuels.

Point – offers further evidence

Temperatures seem to be getting warmer all the time, so that sea level will carry on rising. Already some islands in the Pacific have been flooded and countries like Bangladesh have severe floods because much of the country is very low-lying. Glaciers in mountains like the Himalayas have been melting because temperatures are rising, so that this all goes to the sea via rivers and makes sea level rise.

Explanation – gives a reason for flooding in many countries

Point – gives further evidence for climate change

Explanation – gives a reason for glaciers melting

Evidence – discusses retreating glaciers as evidence for rising sea levels

Another piece of evidence is that the seasons seem to be changing, so that spring is earlier and winters are not so cold as they were and have less snow. Birds now migrate earlier than they did and their nests are being built nine days earlier than forty years ago. So that all seems to mean that there is a lot of evidence that climate is changing.

Point – gives further evidence for climate change (winters less cold)

Evidence – extends the point using the example of bird migrations

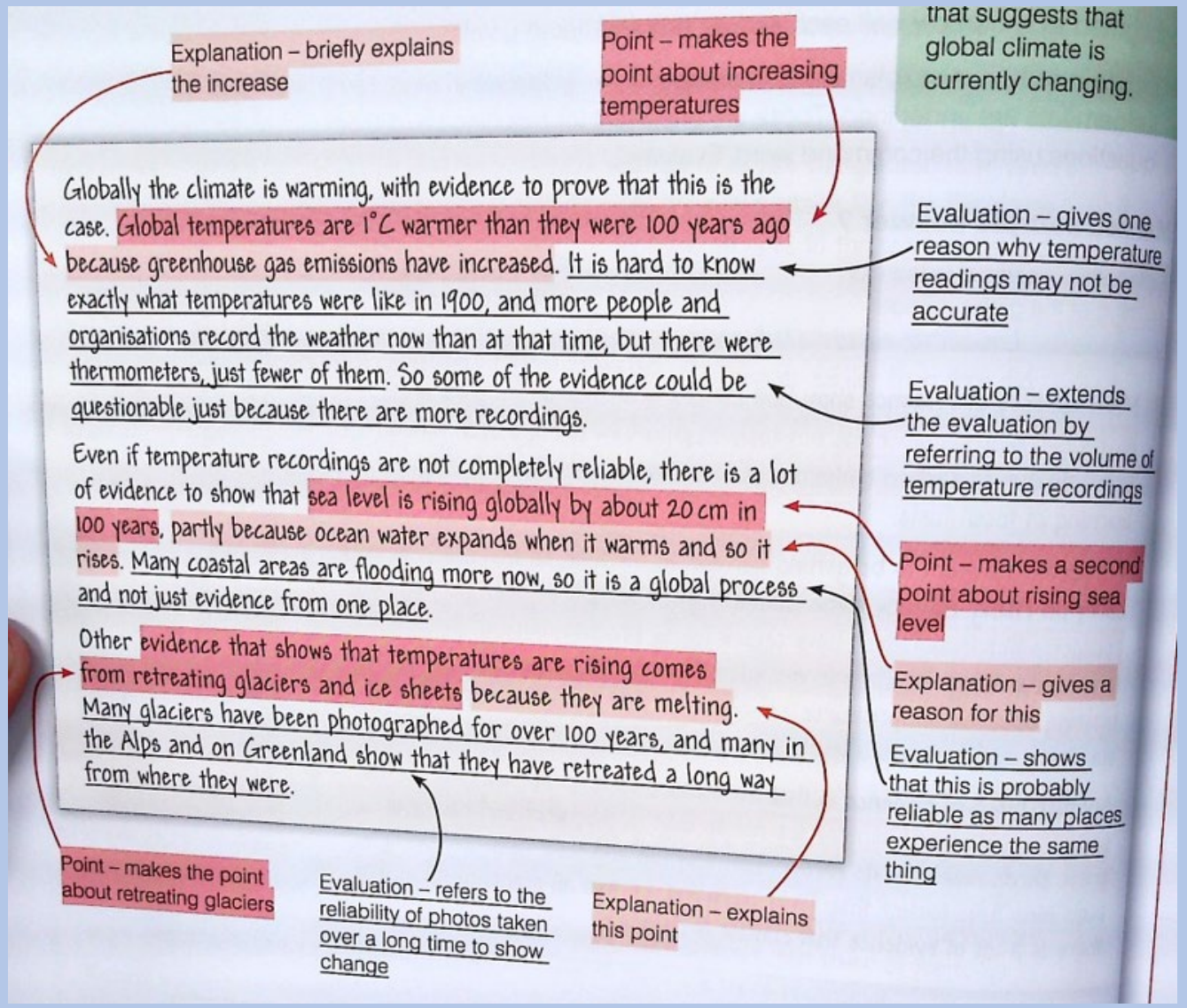
Examiner feedback

Examiners see many answers of this kind. This candidate knows a lot and has learned facts and figures. The answer is a problem, though, because there is no evaluation. The candidate needs to ask themselves – '*What's the evidence that glaciers are melting, and is it reliable? How do I know it's reliable?*'

The answer is therefore a mix of levels.

- It almost reaches Level 3 for knowledge and understanding about climate change and global warming.
- Explanations are mid-Level 2 because they do not always link to warming climate (e.g. flooding in Bangladesh is explained because it is low lying, not because of sea level change).
- However, there is no evaluation, an essential feature for high Level 2 or Level 3.

Faced with this, examiners have to do a 'best fit' or a kind of average. The examiner gives this low Level 2 overall with 4 marks. SPaG is high quality, so 3 marks were awarded.



Examiner feedback

This is a top-quality answer. Notice that this candidate has shown less knowledge and understanding (AO2) than the candidate in sample answer 7, but that nearly half of the answer is spent showing whether the evidence for change is reliable or not (AO3). That's what you need to do in a question with 'Evaluate' as the command word. Spend as much time on evaluating as you do in showing your knowledge and understanding.

The full 8 marks were awarded for the answer. SPaG is high quality, so 3 marks were awarded.

Marked sample answer 12

Question recap

To what extent has international migration impacted upon the growth and character of cities in the UK?

Use **Fig. 2** and your case study of a major city in the UK.

Point – a simple point explains the growth of cities

Explanation – briefly explains the reason for growth, but without examples

Cities like Birmingham are growing fast because of immigrants from other countries. There are jobs in Birmingham which attract people to live there. It has meant that there is pressure on jobs and housing but Birmingham gains because there are also new restaurants and festivals which helps the city's image. When migrants arrive they look for work anywhere, but when they get jobs, then their families come and join them, so that's what makes the population go up so quickly.

Explanation – explains how jobs help to explain immigration, but without examples

Point – helps to answer the part of the question about changing character of cities

Explanation – revisits the explanation for growth of population

Evidence – shows evidence of the benefit of restaurants and festivals

Examiner feedback

The descriptors for Level 2 just about applies to this answer, as follows:

For AO2

- *'Reasonable understanding of the topic'* – the candidate names Birmingham and understands how immigration explains its rapid population growth. The candidate understands impacts of immigration (food and festivals), but there are no named examples as required for Level 3.

For AO3

- *'Some lines of reasoning are present'* and *'Argument is presented with some structure'* is evidence of Level 2. However, there's no judgement. Overall, the answer gains 3 marks.

Marked sample answer 11

Evidence – example of India illustrates the point

Point – quantifies the amount of population growth due to immigration

Explanation – gives the reason for immigration (employment)

Point – quantifies the extent of immigration from different countries

Evidence – evidenced with the example of data from Birmingham

Point – answers 'changing character of cities'

Explanation –explains how the character is changed, with examples

Evidence – illustrates the point with an example

Judgement – about how immigration changes the city

Half of London's population growth in recent years has been migrants from overseas, from countries such as India in Figure 2, because of the jobs available there such as in construction and financial services. International migration has also affected Birmingham because people from over 100 countries have settled there. Only 53% of the people living in Birmingham now are White British residents.

Like the map in Figure 2, many immigrants have changed the character of the parts of inner cities where they live, because you would find restaurants, shops or places of worship in areas where they live. This changes the culture in cities and there are festivals like the Notting Hill Carnival in London. So immigration has had a big effect on cities.

Examiner feedback

The descriptors for Level 3 apply to this answer as follows:

For AO2

- *'Thorough understanding of the topic'* and *'Information is relevant and detailed'*.
- The candidate mentions reasons for growth and the changing character of Birmingham. A source country is named, with an example of cultural events resulting from immigration. There is little mention of Figure 2.

For AO3

- *'Ideas are well developed with clear evidence'* with *'Well-developed lines of reasoning'* to form a *'Clear and logically structured argument'*.
- The candidate explains London's growth and changing character. A source country is named and data are used, with an example of a cultural event.

However, the judgement is weaker than that needed for a top Level 3, so it gets 5 marks