GCSE

Geography B

40351 H/Managing places in the 21st century
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Very few students failed to complete the paper, suggesting that the timing of the paper was not an issue.

Reports suggested that centres had found the examination a sound reflection of the specification and a good test of the knowledge and understanding embodied within the specification.

It was evident that the majority of centres had prepared their students effectively. Teachers are to be congratulated on their efforts towards ensuring that students had a sound grasp of the concepts that underpin the course.

The use of resources was generally good. A significant proportion of students used clearly and appropriately quoted evidence from resources in their answers. However, the use of the Ordnance Survey map extract in Question 1 was variable. It was evident that a number of students did not really understand the demands of map reading and interpretation skills. Consequently, what might be considered fairly easily gained marks were lost.

The use of examples was variable. In many cases students brought in well-developed, appropriate case studies, while in others the instruction to include 'examples' or 'own knowledge' was largely ignored.

(The instruction to include 'own knowledge' can be development of the ideas expressed in the question **or** locational knowledge (examples)).

Key point – remember the key instruction at the beginning of every examination paper. 'Use case studies to support your answers where appropriate.' Encourage students to do this – it is often one of the ways that the higher level marks can be accessed.

The majority of students responded to the question comments effectively.

The use of the mark allocations and writing spaces was generally good; the majority of students taking the opportunity of using the 'extra space'. A small number of students used a 'listing' approach to some of the longer questions. This was often self-limiting and should be discouraged unless time is an issue.

It was evident that a small number of students were not properly equipped. The lack of a ruler can affect levels of accuracy when completing graphs or measuring distances. At this level, basic skills demand a high level of accuracy.

Question 1

1(a)(i) The majority of students used figure 1 effectively to complete this question.

1(a)(ii) The majority of students showed a good understanding about how coastal areas provide opportunities for human habitation and are often multi-functional areas with a wide range of job opportunities. The general quality of answers was often dictated by the level of detail expressed and the extent to which the answer was based on specific example(s). Where a clear cause- effect link was established (locational advantage of coastal area – business/recreational development- consequently attracting people for economic and recreational possibilities) students often produced thoughtful and well developed responses.

Where the cause-effect link was not well considered responses tended to be rather descriptive and did not always address the command “Explain why …..” very effectively.

1(b)(i) and (ii) Students generally showed a good understanding of these questions and were able to produce sound answers. A small number of students named examples of weathering and erosion without fully explaining them which limited the overall mark for the question. In some cases students mixed the two terms up or used an example of erosion to address the weathering part of the question. Overall, of the terms weathering and erosion, erosion appeared to be better understood.

1(c)(i) Responses to this question were variable. A significant number of students produced excellent answers, often using useful diagrams which included appropriate geographical terminology and detailed explanation of longshore drift. However, it was evident that in a small number of cases, students did not really understand the word “sediment” and were unable to fully work out what was required by the question.

1(c)(ii) Responses to this question were variable. A significant number of students were able to link the idea of longshore drift to the formation of a spit, often showing a good level of geographical understanding by using appropriate language. Of those students that clearly did understand the question differentiation was often a result of moving from essentially descriptive answers towards more explanatory comment. In a significant number of cases students produced very effective answers, not only bringing in general points about deposition but also offering specific reasons for the development of the shape of a spit and the formation of areas of salt marsh.
A small number of students used diagrams to help them answer the question. The quality of these was quite variable. Using diagrams to address questions about physical processes and features can be a very effective tool. The only limitation to this is that sometimes a diagram can be an excellent way of describing a physical feature but when the question is also asking for an explanation more information is required.

1(d)(i) Most students recognised the increase in gradient from left to right and were consequently able to gain some credit. A number qualified the general pattern by picking out differences in the slope or using data effectively.

1(d)(ii) The majority of students were able to identify a number of hard engineering techniques, many using specific reference to locational examples. A significant proportion of students went on to offer some explanation about how particular techniques reduced the risk of flooding and erosion. The quality of responses was largely determined by the level of technical detail expressed, which in many cases was significant.

1(e)(i) This question presented few problems. The majority of students were able to identify the landform correctly.

1(e)(ii) This question presented few problems. The majority of students were able to calculate the correct distance between the two points identified in the question. A small number of students failed to respond to the command “to the nearest km” and consequently did not get the mark allocated to the question.

1(e)(iii) The majority of students showed some awareness of the question and were able to offer an understanding about the protection of fragile coastal environments. The critical word in the question was “how” in relation to the protection of these environments. Those students that went beyond simply identifying methods (nature reserves; protected areas etc.) often produced

thoughtful responses, in some cases showing a detailed appreciation of the particular methods being used to preserve coastal environments.
It was evident that a number of students did not fully understand the context of the question and saw the word “protection” in relation to coastal defences. This was clearly inappropriate.

1(f) The majority of students used Figure 4 effectively to identify conflicting pressures on coastal areas. A number went on to develop this theme further by showing an understanding of how economic and environmental sustainability is not an easy balance to achieve. The idea of “the need for conservation” was not always picked up and this tended to restrict marks at the top end of the mark range. Those students that pick this idea up often produced thoughtful answers, many of which brought in addition and effectively documented examples.

1(g) Many students picked up on the word “managed” without really considering the following word, “sustainably”. Consequently a number of answers offered a quite sound description of management strategies (at times based around clear examples) but did not always fully address the context of the question. If the general description was sound and the chosen example appropriate students were able to score effectively within the Level 1 mark range. In order to move into Level 2 students needed to address the question command more effectively by offering some understanding about the idea of sustainability. Further development of both understanding and locational detail was required to move into Level 3.

Question 2

2(a)(i) This question presented few problems. Virtually all students described the change to world urban population effectively by using the data shown on Figure 5. A small number of students failed to read the question carefully and described the whole time span on the graph rather than “between 1990 and 2010” as expressed in the question.

2(a)(ii) This question presented few problems. Virtually all students used the information in Figure 5 effectively to describe the change to the number of megacities. A very small number of students had clearly not read the resource carefully and were consequently slightly confused by the term “megacity”.

2(b)(i) Relatively few students showed a real understanding of the word “urbanisation”, although it was apparent that a significant number had some awareness bout what it means. The learning of the key definitions throughout the unit of study is vital because they underpin the general understanding and are frequently used in examination questions. A key definition page is a useful part of any revision scheme.

2(b)(iii) Responses to this question were variable. Where students had a detailed example at their command responses were often very impressive. However, in many cases answers were quite generic, at times doing very little more than simply repeating the question by stating that “a water project has been put in place in ….and this has brought clean water to the area”.
A number of students considered general improvement schemes which included water/sanitation developments. This was a perfectly acceptable approach; the overall mark reflected the element of water/sanitation detail expressed in the answer.

2(c)(i) The majority of students used Figure 7 very effectively to identify pollution issues in urban areas. In most cases students went on to use this information effectively to consider the impact

of pollution on both people and the environment. In general, responses to this question were excellent, showing a good level of understanding and, in many cases, considerable detail.

2(c)(ii) Students generally showed a good knowledge about the types of pollution that affect urban areas and a sound understanding of the issues linked to this. However, the word “challenge” was not always well considered. Many students focused on pollution problems, and while this gave some insight into the question it did not fully address the idea of “challenge”. Those students that did focus their attention on the idea of “challenge” often produced thoughtful answers, many with carefully chosen and effectively developed examples. In this context, the major observations made focused on the cost of management, the challenge of managing pollution in rapidly developing and crowded cities and the challenge of balancing economic development and environmental management.

The key to this part of the course is really to firstly identify and appreciate the causes of pollution; show an awareness of the problems and issues that pollution creates and then understand the methods and difficulties of managing pollution (expressed as “challenges”).

2(d)(i) The majority of students used the information in Figure 8 effectively to identify and show some awareness of the differences in quality of life between the three areas on Figure 8. A significant proportion of students then went on to suggest how the data illustrated inequalities, either by comparing individual data sets, comparing total quality of life scores or considering the three areas in relation to the stated average for the city as a whole.
It was evident that a small number of students did not really understand the idea of “inequalities” and a number of students discussed the three data sets as if they were from three different cities.

2(d)(ii) The level of understanding for this question was variable. It appeared that, in many cases students were really simply thinking on their feet by statin obvious links such as “better education would mean better jobs and higher incomes “. While this approach had some superficial merit it did not fully address the question which was about reducing inequalities rather than making general improvements. Those students who talked about specifically focused programmes of health or education in deprived areas and the positive impact that they are having generally produced excellent responses.

2(e) Answers to this question were variable and there was some obvious confusion about the term “urban redevelopment/urban regeneration” with a number of students using inappropriate “eco” projects as examples. While some eco projects or elements of them are part of regeneration strategies and were therefore clearly acceptable, a number of students used examples which did not really fall into this category. Those students who did select an appropriate example (a number used the Olympic site) often produced answers that were very effectively documented and showed an impressive appreciation of the question. The key to this question is an appreciation that regeneration projects are about more than simply “jobs and money” (as so often stated in answers). Some understanding that these projects are more “holistic” and include social, economic and environmental benefits generally produces more rounded and detailed responses.

2(f)(i) This question presented few problems. The majority of students were able to offer an appreciation of what is meant by “eco-settlement”.

2(f)(ii) It was clear that the majority of students had some understanding about the idea of sustainable urban settlements or how elements of urban management were being used in an increasingly sustainable way. The focus of answers generally took one of the following three approaches. A number of students used examples of sustainable settlements (Bedzed and

Dongtan were popular choices) to develop very effective answers. Another approach was the option of using particular elements of sustainable management such as housing developments, industrial or social developments or infrastructural / energy management. While this did not always give a holistic appreciation of sustainability it did allow students to bring in useful case studies and consequently produce some excellent answers. The third approach was where students talked about sustainable management in a generic way, often using energy or transport as a single key idea or simply repeating ideas from Figure 9, with no real locational context. While this approach was worthy of some credit it did not fully address the commands of the question and was consequently rather self-limiting.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion