AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

General Studies 1766
Specification B

GENB2   Space

Report on the Examination
2009 examination - January series

GENB2 Space

General Comments

Candidates were generally well prepared for this paper and there was clear evidence, amongst most, of the unit having been taught. Time seems to have been managed well with very few candidates not completing all the questions in the time. A number of candidates did appear to spend longer on question 1 than the others. There is some evidence that question 3 was answered rather too briefly and this may be due to time-management issues. This inevitably would have had an impact on the marks gained by the candidate. Candidates are advised to spend thirty minutes on each of the three questions.

As all questions are compulsory and different skills are being tested, there was an imbalance, at times, in the marks scored which reflected the individual candidate's ability to handle data, interpret images or analyse and extrapolate from text. Candidates would have scored poorly on any of the essay questions if they bullet-pointed their answers or simply provided a list-like response without explanation, amplification or development.

The quality of English was generally good with a lot of fluent well expressed answers.

Question 1

This was taken from Section 3.2.1 of the Specification: Science and Technology: B: Climate Change.

Q1 (a) Candidates showed that they could interpret the data and identify trends but this was often not supported by the second part of the question that asked them to account for the changes. Far too few candidates made specific reference to the figures by either giving precise figures from the data or by doing simple calculations that would illustrate the points being made. It is imperative that the candidate uses the actual figures rather than, for example, stating that emissions went up over the period shown. The consequence was that relatively few candidates achieved more than 5/10 for this component. Sadly, a significant number of candidates made reference to shipping and aviation, using cheap flights as an example, as the main factors in the increase in emissions from transport when the graph clearly excludes them.

Q1 (b) A lot of candidates gained full marks here, for either or both parts, by making
(i) & (ii) succinct bullet-pointed answers. Those who did not tended to give a reason but missed the cue of "Explain" which would access the second mark for each point made. A brief explanation was all that was needed to secure that extra mark. This was a straightforward question where a little thinking before putting pen to paper helped. It is worth pointing out that this question is not just a repeat of the old Unit 3 (d).

The other reason why some candidates scored poorly was that some answers were very unconvincing with suggestions about people lying about emissions or the equipment not working properly or by not addressing the issue of future projections in part (ii). In the case of the latter, statements such as "something might be invented" or "technology might develop" were unlikely to gain any marks.

Q1 (c) The best answers tended to focus on issues outside Europe with good reference to emerging economies like China and India. There seemed to be plenty of awareness of world affairs that was applied with varying degrees of success. Kyoto featured prominently with some very focused responses and some misconceptions.

The position of the USA was addressed with many seeing President Obama as a positive change after the Bush years. Reference was made to natural disasters, like volcanic eruptions, and to wars with varying degrees of success. Some referred to emissions as a low priority because of internal issues such as poverty, but often did not give a specific example. Far too many candidates put the problem down to individual choice rather than looking at the broader national and international issues. Other weak answers were the result of a brief paragraph rather than an attempt at analysis.

Question 2

This was taken from Section 3.2.3 of the Specification: Arts and Media: A: Art and Public Space.

Candidates tended to answer this question in three equal parts, writing as much on each of the three components.

Q2 (a) There were some very imaginative answers to this question. Relatively few used other examples to support their arguments but there were references to other works of art such as the embracing couple in St. Pancras as well as some reference to works abroad including the statue of Jesus in Rio and street art in Chicago. The word "inspirational" seemed to provoke good discussion with a lot of articulate and expansive writing about meaning. Few strayed too far from "The Angel of the North" but there were good references to symbolism, protection, achievement, and regional and cultural identity.

Q2 (b) This was probably the least well done of the three parts. Too many relied only on describing the source and focusing too much on the family. Where that happened, the better answers talked about the family being the bedrock of society: the weaker answers said it might encourage you to start a family. However, many wrote about its role in providing a focus for urban living, encouraging personal creativity and the fact that its size meant one could relate to it. Those who used local examples like the Sock Man in Loughborough gained credit.

Q2 (c) Candidates did tend to repeat some of the material from parts (a) and (b) and, whilst that could be effective, for many it lacked the direction the question sought. Answers were generally balanced but, where there was an over-emphasis on one side only, marks tended to be lower because there was little discussion. This answer threw up rather more, but not enough, local examples. Answers were wide-ranging and many had clear opinions on the value of public art. Useful exemplification included the Wicker Man in Bridgwater, the Allison Lapper sculpture in Trafalgar Square and the work of Banksy.

Question 3

This was drawn from Section 3.2.5 of the Specification: Beliefs and Values: A: Multiculturalism.

There was a small number of candidates who did not read or ignored the instructions and attempted balanced answers for each part rather than the one-sided response that was required. This had inevitable consequences as they would have wasted roughly half their time. This tended to be more of a centre response, suggesting that candidates had not been briefed adequately. One of the consequences was that up to half of the answer was irrelevant which inevitably affected marks.

Unfortunately, there was a small minority of candidates who played the "race card" in answering this question and produced anti-immigration rants. Too many just focused on the issues in the texts: the better responses introduced new material.

Q3 (a) In general, this was not as well done as 3(b) but candidates did address central issues of reinforcing belief, moral standards and appropriate codes of behaviour. Weaker responses focused too much on a single issue and over-exemplified the point at the expense of other areas of discussion. Issues of security, cultural tradition were addressed but almost all focused on faith schools in relation to ethnic minority students. Very few addressed the long and very obvious existence of faith schools in the Christian tradition. Most candidates seemed unaware of what they provided, other than generally better test and exam results. The latter point was touched upon but seldom developed.

Q3 (b) In some ways, this was answered better than part (a) as candidates seemed to have stronger views against faith schools rather than in support of them. Most candidates addressed issues of segregation, social isolation, multi-culturalism and the potential for discrimination. The cost to the taxpayer was a factor often cited, with discussions of how the money could be better spent within education or elsewhere like the NHS. Few addressed issues of fairness or selection by other means.

Where candidates did badly on this part, the reason seemed to be linked to time-management with some evidence of this final question having been rushed or simply not finished.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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