



General Certificate of Education

Geography 2030 *Specification*

GEOG2 Geographical Skills

Report on the Examination *2010 examination - June series*

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General

This was the fourth sitting of GEOG2 of the AQA GCE Geography specification. This meant that centres now had access to a broad range of previous questions in preparing their candidates for this paper. Variable use appeared to have been made of this resource bank, particularly with regard to the fieldwork questions.

Of the total 50 marks, 25 marks were available for Geographical Skills (taken from page 16 of the Specification). The 'vehicle' through which the skills are examined is always either the Core Physical Section (Rivers, floods and management) or Core Human Section (Population Change). In this paper Population Change was the topic area. By the time candidates sat this paper they should all have been taught the Core Human Section and the Core Physical Section. There are always 6 marks allocated to Assessment Objective One (Page 18 Specification) for this paper. This was specifically examined in 1(c)(ii) and 1(d).

This year the specific theme for the first question was the changes to India's population and structure along with associated impacts of this change. The paper was similar in demand to the previous skills papers with many candidates scoring well in this section. There were some clearly practical elements including the completion of a comparative line graph, a proportional circle and a compound bar graph. It is still disappointing to see so many candidates poorly prepared for this type of practical examination of geographical skills.

The second part of the paper (worth 25 marks) was a series of linked fieldwork questions; five in total on this paper. The questions had to be sufficiently broad to allow all candidates who had undertaken a range of physical and human themes, fair and equal access to the paper. The basis for the questions is always page 16 of the Specification. River studies appear to have become increasingly common. In terms of the development of the fieldwork section of the paper, it is also important to note that questions will vary in every series. This is in order to reduce the formulaic nature and potential predictability of writing about fieldwork. If candidates have undertaken a full piece of fieldwork and experienced all aspects of the subsequent write-up, they will have every chance of being successful in the examination. Centres are therefore advised to use model answers with care when preparing their students for the examination. Clearly some candidates had model answers prepared and with the inevitable originality of the questions some candidates produced incorrect answers. Understanding how to respond to specific command words is something centres may need to focus on in preparation for future examinations on the fieldwork section.

Question 1

1(a)(i) Most candidates successfully completed the line graphs. Simple errors were made by misreading the scale and / or incorrect use of the key. A small number also failed to spot the question itself and left the graph incomplete.

1(a)(ii) There were a number of ways of scoring credit in this response and candidates were generally successful. While India's rate of growth outstrips China's, more sophisticated answers commented upon the fact that India's rate also shows signs of reduction albeit at a slower rate. Manipulation of data was worth one mark on this question. Simple lift was not creditworthy but once simple calculations were made, credit became available. Some responses incorrectly referred to China's reduction in population over the period which was clearly not the case; the reduction only appeared after 2033.

1(b)(i) The most effective way to complete the proportional circle involved converting the data to percentages and then degrees by multiplying by 3.6. Failure to use a protractor was a limiting factor and some never had access to a calculator. Failure to bring appropriate basic mathematical equipment will continue to penalise candidates. Allowances were made for those who did not use a sharp pencil though. The inability to use the key to identify the segments was also a limiting factor.

1(b)(ii) Reference to changing population total was relatively straightforward. A mark was also available for the manipulation of data, which had to go beyond straight lift from the table. Basic responses referred only to Figure 2 with simple lifting to exemplify structural change in a rather repetitive nature. Such responses were held to one mark. The best responses showed an understanding of the relative structural changes such as the relative decline of the 0-14 age groups, the stability of the 15-64 age group and considerable increase in the relative proportion of 65 and over.

1(c)(i) This question was answered with varying levels of success. For Hyderabad many added 10 millimetres to the existing estimated population in 2008 when only 3 millimetres should have been added. The same was also the case for Mumbai with many adding 30 millimetres for the estimated population increase by 2030 (instead of adding 11 millimetres). Incorrect use of the key was relatively uncommon.

1(c)(ii) This question required knowledge and understanding of factors which lead to population growth in urban environments. The essential key factors are migration and changing births rates / death rates. In order to access Level 2 candidates had to show some awareness of the urban context of the question, along with some reference to either migration or birth rate / death rate change. Weaker responses wrote in very general terms about health care, sanitation facilities and family planning. Better responses added contextual detail which showed an understanding as to why migration into Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata might be accelerating due to their regional centre status and the impact of industrial and service sector growth.

1(d) While credit was available for knowledge and understanding, this was a skills question which required candidates to identify information as photographic evidence. Too many candidates inferred that which was not clearly present. For example lack of sanitation was not clearly evident in the image. Those who used the photograph and clearly identified characteristics such as poorly built structures, evidence of improvement and better quality housing nearby scored good credit. Others noted the poor quality transport infrastructure and evidence of electricity supply as further creditworthy points.

Question 2

2(a) Physical studies tended to be much more clearly focused in terms of describing theories, concepts and ideas related to their chosen enquiries. In general, centres preparing students using human studies really do need to spend more time outlining the basic ideas which underpin their fieldwork. This need not be a textbook theory. It may well be a local issue. Too many human studies simply could not describe the basis of their investigation in a meaningful way. River studies which described basic assumptions of Bradshaw's Model also needed to go a little further to describe the nature of the interrelationships where appropriate. Those that did this readily accessed Level 2.

2(b)(i) Candidates either knew this answer or they did not. Some mistakenly took quantitative data to mean large amounts of data, with qualitative data meaning higher quality data. Other limited responses only sought to distinguish by giving examples. The best responses gave a simple distinguishing definition with an example of one or both types taken from their own study.

2(b)(ii) Most candidates chose primary data in this question. In general, human studies really do need to be more precise in describing data collection techniques. These responses are often very unclear, leaving gaps which did not demonstrate how the data was collected. Candidates who described a method which could be replicated from the information given scored Level 2 (and often full marks). This should have, if appropriate, included the use of sampling as part of that methodology.

2(b)(iii) 'Outline' required candidates to write a short account of how they used their chosen technique. Candidates are still struggling with this sort of question. Centres need to explain to candidates that this question is about showing the examiner that there is an understanding of how to construct a chosen presentation technique. For example, describing how to draw a scatter graph by creating the axis, appropriate scale, plotting the points, drawing a line of best fit and identifying anomalies would have easily scored four marks. Those who chose to outline a technique using information technology often did so poorly. While this was an entirely legitimate approach, these candidates often failed to outline the stages in the creation of their technique using such media.

2(c) This question was not particularly well answered. Candidates were given a clear steer regarding what constituted evaluative content in this context. The most limiting factor of weaker responses was the basic, unsophisticated nature of the strengths, weaknesses and improvements. For example, too many responses wrote in very basic terms about poor equipment or bad weather as weaknesses in their study. Instead of focusing on the impact of methods upon other aspects of the study (such as the reliability of the results and the validity of the conclusions), these answers became quite self penalising. Candidates generally need to be more effective at critically examining different elements of their own study in preparation for this paper.